

H. Hamilton

A N
A T T E M P T
TO PROVE THE
EXISTENCE AND ABSOLUTE PERFECTION
OF THE
SUPREME UNORIGINATED BEING,
IN A DEMONSTRATIVE MANNER.

THUS SHALT THOU SAY UNTO THE CHILDREN OF
ISRAEL, I AM HATH SENT ME UNTO YOU.

Exod. iii. 14.

VERUM ILLE, VIR MAGNIFICUS, QUÆRIT ARGU-
MENTUM NON EX DEFINITIONE DEI DESUMP-
TUM, SED EX IPSA RATIONE NATURALI, ET PER
QUOD DEDUCAMUR IN DEFINITIONEM DEI.

Phil. à Limborch Epist. ad Joh. Locke.

Locke's Works, Voi. IV. P. 442.

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DEAN OF ARMAGH.

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TO HIS GRACE

RICHARD, Lord Archbishop of ARMAGH,
BARON ROKEBY, PRIMATE and METRO-
POLITAN of all IRELAND,

THE FOLLOWING

T R E A T I S E

IS HUMBLY DEDICATED

By his Grace's

Most dutiful

and obedient Servant,

HUGH HAMILTON.



T H E

INTRODUCTION

Containing a View of the Arguments that have been used for proving the Existence and Attributes of God, and the Reasons for proposing a new one.

THOUGH the following argument may be easily enough understood without any preface or introduction, yet there will be some advantages in having first read what is here delivered: it will, I hope, contribute to remove a prejudice that has long prevailed against our endeavouring to prove the being and perfections of God otherwise than from the consideration of his works; and the reader, being previously made acquainted with the na-

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ture of the following argument and the reasons for now offering it to the public, will be better qualified to judge of it, and perhaps be better disposed to give it his attention.

To prove the existence, unity, and absolute perfection of the supreme Being, and thereby to establish the foundation of religion natural and revealed, two kinds of arguments or methods of reasoning have been used. What these are Doctor Edmund Law * has briefly described in the Preface to his Translation of Archbishop King's *Treatise on the Origin of Evil*.

“ There are two general ways of reasoning, called arguments *a priori* and *a posteriori*, or according to what logicians commonly stile the *synthetic* and *analytic* methods. The former lays down some evident *principles*, and then deduces the several consequences necessarily resulting

* Now Bishop of Carlisle.

“ from

“ from them. The latter begins with the
 “ phænomena themselves, and traces them
 “ up to their *original*, and from the known
 “ properties of these phænomena arrives
 “ at the nature of their cause. Now the
 “ former of these is evidently preferable
 “ where it can be had; since the latter
 “ must depend upon a large induction of
 “ particulars, any of which failing invali-
 “ dates the whole argument and spoils a
 “ demonstration.”

Doctor S. Clarke, in his answers to a sixth
 and a seventh letter concerning the argu-
 ment *a priori*, says: “ There are but two
 “ ways by which the *being*, and *all* or *any*
 “ of the attributes of God, can possibly be
 “ proved: the one *a priori*, the other *a*
 “ *posteriori*. The proof *a posteriori* is level
 “ to all men’s capacities; because there is
 “ an endless gradation of wise and useful
 “ phænomena of nature, from the most
 “ obvious to the most abstruse, which affords

“ at least a moral and reasonable proof of
 “ the being of God, to the several capaci-
 “ ties of all unprejudiced men, who have
 “ any probity of mind. The argument *a*
 “ *posteriori* is indeed by far the most gene-
 “ rally useful, most easy to be understood,
 “ and in some degree suited to all capaci-
 “ ties, and therefore it ought always to be
 “ distinctly insisted upon. But forasmuch
 “ as atheistical writers have sometimes op-
 “ posed the being and attributes of God by
 “ such metaphysical reasonings as can no
 “ otherwise be obviated than by arguing *a*
 “ *priori*; therefore *this* manner of arguing
 “ is also *useful* and *necessary* in its proper
 “ place.” I shall now consider more parti-
 cularly the nature of these methods of
 reasoning, how far each of them has been
 carried, and with what degree of evidence
 they have proved their conclusion; and
 shall begin with the common argument *a*
posteriori.

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When we consider our own nature and the nature of those things which fall under our observation, we find numberless reasons to convince us, that these are such things as could not possibly have existed always, or of themselves. Hence we conclude that their existence, and the manner in which they have been disposed, must have been the effect of some cause. And then the beauty, order, and utility so conspicuous in the contrivance and arrangement of these things display to us such evident marks not only of design, but of vast power, knowledge, and goodness, that we conclude they must have been the work of some Being possessed of all these attributes in the most perfect manner. The great uniformity, constancy, and regularity with which all the operations in the material world are conducted sufficiently indicate that the plan of the whole was designed and executed, and is still carried on, by
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one author and governor. And seeing not the least reason or occasion for supposing *more* than one, we conclude that there is *but one* first cause and supreme governor of all things, whom we call *God*. This is the substance of the argument *a posteriori*, and this method of reasoning is so natural and congenial to the human mind, that there is no nation on which it has not had some sort of influence. For the most ignorant and uncultivated part of mankind appear to have apprehended that the things of this world were dependent on Beings of a nature superior to those that were the objects of their senses. Among the ancients, those who had the greatest share of genius and sagacity, and had most enlarged their knowledge and improved their understandings by meditation and deep researches into the nature of things, were the most firmly persuaded that this world was the work of some great Being of whose power and perfections

fections they entertained very sublime ideas. As human knowledge has been much enlarged, especially by the late discoveries in astronomy and the several branches of natural philosophy, the argument *a posteriori* has been wonderfully strengthened. And we find that Bacon, Boyle, Newton, and others I might name, to whom the world is indebted for those great discoveries, and whose extraordinary abilities have been justly deemed an honour to our species; we find, I say, all those deep and accurate reasoners, those most sagacious discoverers of truth, have strenuously contended, that the phænomena of nature clearly evince the eternal existence, power, and perfections of the Creator, and they valued the most beautiful and grandest of their discoveries chiefly as they tended to illustrate and confirm this important truth.

We may therefore say, that the argument *a posteriori* naturally affects the human

man mind in proportion to its capacity and its improvement: to the lowest understandings it affords some glimmering of the truth; to the highest and most improved it shines with full lustre, and impresses them with a clear and firm persuasion that an all-perfect Being is the author and governor of the universe. To our other arguments *a posteriori* we may reasonably add all those which prove, that our *bible* contains many ancient prophecies which have been exactly fulfilled, and records many miraculous events which really came to pass: for these are so many strong and clear arguments to prove the existence of one all-perfect and original author of all things; such as that book describes, and by whose direction and assistance it claims to have been written.

But some there have been who imagined they could account for the present existence of things, and all the appearances of
nature,

nature, in a more easy and conceivable manner than by considering them as the works of one eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient Being. They thought it unnecessary to look beyond the material world, the visible mundane system, or to enquire for any cause of its existence. They contended that the universe or entire system of things had *no author*, but has existed always and of itself, and is actuated by an indefeasible *necessity* impregnated, as it were, with a powerful vivifying principle, by whose energy all the various generations, corruptions, operations and changes of things are incessantly carried on, without a beginning and without a possibility of ever coming to an end. It is probable that but a very few persons have ever been able to bring themselves to think seriously in this manner. Spinoza indeed seems to have done so: he conceived that all substances are but parts or different modifications

tions of one infinite, indivisible substance, which he calls God, or the divine nature; and that this one substance must of necessity modify itself into infinite things, in infinite manners, or in all possible varieties. He has taken a great deal of pains to prove that this is the true system of nature; and proceeds in a formal manner with definitions, axioms, and all the apparatus of demonstration. It would be tedious, though not difficult, to shew that he proceeds entirely on false principles, that several of his definitions are ambiguous or unintelligible, that many of his axioms contain assertions contrary both to science and experience, and that most of his definitions and axioms are so contrived as to presuppose or include the chief points which by their help he endeavours to demonstrate. The fallacies and absurdities of his arguments have been fully exposed by Doctor Clarke in his *Demonstration of the Being and*
Attri-

Attributes of God. I shall mention but one circumstance, which alone will be sufficient to shew that this atheistical scheme of Spinoza's is utterly inconsistent with the phænomena of nature. He acknowledges (which indeed he could not avoid doing) that his principles must necessarily oblige us to deny all final causes, or that particular things were made and designed for the purposes they are known to serve. He therefore imputes it to mere ignorance and superstition that men have imagined "their eyes were made for seeing, their teeth for chewing, food for nourishing their bodies, the sun for giving light, or the sea to be a proper receptacle for fishes." All this is the plain and acknowledged consequence of his system: so that till a man thinks he can bring himself to give up his former notions of these matters and reject them as vulgar prejudices, the effects of ignorance and superstition, he must not expect to receive
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any satisfaction from the demonstrations of Spinoza *.

Common sense and, I may say, experience will always be able to prevent men in general from falling into the absurdities of downright atheism, or from being persuaded by any metaphysical subtilties, that all things are so carried on by a blind and fatal *necessity* that no one event could possibly have happened otherwise than it has done. Atheistical writers therefore, not being like to bring over many proselytes to their way of thinking, are not so dangerous to the cause of religion and morality as those that are called *Scepticks*. These are such as admit that this world must indeed have been the work of some superior Being, who is to be called God, and who had power and intelligence enough to do just what we see he has done; but at the

* The reader will find the passages in Spinoza's works here referred to, frequently cited in Doctor Clarke's Demonstration.

same time assert, that none of our arguments are sufficient to produce a rational and firm belief of the perfections of his natural and moral attributes, whereon we may found a system of religious duties due to him as the moral governor of the world, who concerns himself in the happiness of his creatures, and from whose goodness and power we might hope for protection in this life, or for happiness in a better life hereafter. These writers would have us believe the existence of a God, or superior Being, merely as a speculative truth, not as one from which we might, with a reasonable certainty, draw any inferences that should influence our conduct or give us either hopes or fears: and thus they propose a system which, for any useful purpose, is no better than atheism.

Before I give an account of the method of reasoning on this subject *synthetically* or *a priori*, it may be proper to take some notice

notice of the objections made by sceptical writers to those arguments that are drawn *a posteriori* for proving the being and perfections of God. To find what these objections are, we need look no further than to the writings of the late Mr. Hume. That gentleman, from his first setting out in the literary world, seems to have bent all his endeavours to invalidate and discredit every species of argument that has been used to prove the existence of one supreme, all-perfect author of the universe. It was plainly with this view that, in his *Essays or Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding*, he advanced certain principles and notions which, if admitted, would subvert our reasonings not only on this subject, but on most others. The false notions and groundless cavils he has proposed in these essays have been fully refuted by the learned and judicious Doctor Leland in his *View of the Deistical Writers*. And Doctor Beattie
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in his excellent *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, has in a very masterly manner demolished his whole system of scepticism, and proved it to be entirely repugnant to those received principles on which all our reasonings are naturally and necessarily founded. This ingenious work seems to have had some effect on Mr. Hume, and to have made him depart somewhat from that extravagant and excessive scepticism he had so long cultivated. In his last work (published after his death) entitled *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, he admits, what he had formerly denied, that we may rationally and with confidence argue from the nature of an effect to the nature of its cause, and that we may by this means assure ourselves that this world must have been the work of a very powerful and intelligent Being. But he will not allow that we can by any means satisfy ourselves any further as to the

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the nature and attributes of this great Being. In the introductory part of this work he expresses himself thus: "What truth
 " so obvious, so certain as the *being* of a
 " God, which the most ignorant ages have
 " acknowledged, for which the most refined
 " geniuses have ambitiously striven to pro-
 " duce new proofs and arguments? What
 " truth so important as this, which is the
 " ground of all our hopes, the surest foun-
 " dation of morality, the firmest support
 " of society, and the only principle which
 " ought never to be a moment from our
 " thoughts and meditations? But in treat-
 " ing of this obvious and important truth
 " what obscure questions occur concerning
 " the *nature* of this divine Being, his attri-
 " butes, his decrees, his plan of provi-
 " dence? These have been always subject-
 " ed to the disputations of men; concern-
 " ing these human reason has not reached
 " any certain determination. But these
 " are

“ are topics so interesting that we cannot
 “ restrain our restless inquiries with regard
 “ to them; *though nothing but doubt, uncer-*
 “ *tainty and contradiction have as yet been the*
 “ *result of our most accurate researches.*”

This last is a very violent assertion, and would make one think the author intended to point out some contradictions in the arguments that have been used to prove the perfections of the divine nature and attributes: but no such thing has he even attempted. Two of the persons engaged in this dialogue are little more than cyphers; the third who conducts and concludes the conversation, and gives the result of the whole, is much employed in recapitulating the difficulties and objections Mr. Hume, in his essays, had proposed on this subject; and therefore we are to suppose he expresses the author's own sentiments.

Though he gives up most of these objections, yet he goes on to treat the subject

of natural theology with great levity through a large part of the work *, and with a kind of studied inconsistency throughout the whole, running himself

* To give but one instance of the levity with which our author has treated his subject. When Cleanthes had shewn that, from the evident marks of contrivance, design and wisdom which appear in the works of nature, we must conclude from analogy, that the world had a most powerful and wise maker. Philo, for so the principal speaker is called, observes ;
 “ The Bramins assert, that the world arose from an
 “ infinite spider, who spun this whole complicated
 “ mass from his bowels, and annihilates afterwards the
 “ whole or any part of it, by absorbing it again, and
 “ resolving it into its own essence. Here is a species
 “ of cosmogony, which appears to us ridiculous ;
 “ because a spider is a little contemptible animal,
 “ whose operations we are never likely to take for a
 “ model of the whole universe. But still here is a
 “ new species of analogy even in our globe. And
 “ were there a planet wholly inhabited by spiders,
 “ which is very possible, this inference, would there
 “ appear as natural and irrefragable as that which in
 “ our planet ascribes the origin of all things to design
 “ and intelligence, as explained by Cleanthes. Why
 “ an orderly system may not be spun from the belly as
 “ well as from the brain, it will be difficult for him to
 “ give a satisfactory reason.” (Page 141.)

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frequently, and without the least hesitation, into the most palpable contradictions. From which it appears that the author could have had nothing in view but to blind and puzzle the minds of his readers, to take off their attention from the real merits of the question, and make them imagine that no conclusions were to be expected on this subject that *can afford any inference that may affect human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance, or that can enable us to infer the moral attributes of God with any appearance of probability.*

This is plainly what the author would have his readers think, and what he thought himself; as we may see from the conclusion he makes Philo, the principal speaker, draw when he comes to sum up what had been said. He does not choose to propose his conclusion positively but, as it were, hypothetically, yet he does more than infi-

nuate, that it is the only one we need ever expect to arrive at.

“ If, says he, the whole of natural the-
 “ ology, as some people seem to maintain,
 “ resolves itself into one simple, though
 “ somewhat ambiguous, at least undefined
 “ proposition; *that the cause or causes of*
 “ *order in the universe probably bear some*
 “ *remote analogy to human intelligence*: if
 “ this proposition be not capable of exten-
 “ sion, variation, or more particular expli-
 “ cation; if it affords no inference that af-
 “ fects human life, or can be the source of
 “ any action or forbearance; and if the
 “ analogy, imperfect as it is, can be carried
 “ no further than to the human intelli-
 “ gence, and cannot be transferred with
 “ any appearance of probability to the
 “ other qualities of the mind; (*he means*
 “ *the moral qualities*) if this be really the
 “ case, what can the most inquisitive, con-
 “ templative and religious man do more
 “ than

“ than give a plain, philosophical assent to
 “ the proposition as often as it occurs, and
 “ believe that the arguments on which it
 “ is established exceed the objections which
 “ lie against it? Some astonishment indeed
 “ will naturally arise from the greatness of
 “ the object; some melancholy from its
 “ obscurity; and some contempt for hu-
 “ man reason, that can give no solution
 “ more satisfactory with regard to so ex-
 “ traordinary and magnificent a question.”
 (Page 261—263.)

If Mr. Hume really thought we could
 not, with a reasonable and sufficient de-
 gree of probability, arrive at higher and
 clearer ideas of the divine Being and his
 perfections than he has here represented;
 it is very surprising he should not have
 been able with all his industry and subti-
 lity to produce any one solid, or even *new*
 objection to those arguments which are
 commonly esteemed sufficient to satisfy
 any

any reasonable person, that there is but one original Being, the first cause of all things, and that he must be unlimitedly perfect in all attributes both natural and moral.

All the objections to our arguments that Mr. Hume has *seriously* urged, and to which he has not allowed Philo's opponents to give any answer, are but three: they are indeed all that have ever been made, and the reader will easily perceive how little weight there is in them. First, that from considering the phænomena of nature which fall under our observation, we cannot prove that *their* author must be the author of *universal nature*, or even that they must all be the work of *one Being*, and not the joint work of several distinct independent Beings. (Page 109.) Secondly, that admitting these phænomena are the work of but one Being, yet as the cause ought only to be proportioned to the effect,

effect, and the effects are not infinite, we have no right to ascribe to their author any greater power and intelligence than were necessary for the production of these effects; and therefore we cannot prove that the power and knowledge of the Deity must be infinite or unlimited. (P. 104, 105.) If by these objections Mr. Hume intended only to shew, that from considering the phænomena of nature we cannot *strictly demonstrate* the unity or the unlimited perfection of their author, we may admit his objections, so far, without hurting our cause in the least. The most learned and judicious divines (as I shall have occasion to observe hereafter) freely acknowledge that the argument *a posteriori* is not such as can prove the unity of the supreme Being, or the unlimited perfections of his attributes, in a way that may be called *strictly demonstrative*. Yet they maintain that it proves these important points to so
very

very high a degree of *probability* as ought to leave no doubt in the mind of any reasonable unprejudiced person, who fairly examines it on the same principles he would examine the force of any other probable argument; and they insist that it is sufficient to produce in us a firm belief and assurance, approaching as near as possible to that actual and certain *knowledge* which is produced by demonstration. If therefore Mr. Hume meant to object only to the want of strict demonstration in the argument *a posteriori*, he had no opponents; and if he meant to shew that this argument wants that high degree of probability we ascribe to it, his reasonings are extremely weak. All he says against our concluding, that the universe had but one original author amounts only to this, “ that
 “ an intelligent Being of such vast power
 “ and capacity as is necessary to produce
 “ the universe exceeds all analogy and even
 “ compre-

“comprehension.” (P. 109.) Why such a Being should be said to *exceed all analogy*, or what can be the meaning of that phrase, I cannot conceive. This author allows that from our own small powers and capacities we may, by analogy, form ideas of Beings endowed with vastly superior power. Why then may we not by pursuing the like analogy raise our ideas still higher, and conceive *one Being* of the utmost power and capacity? What is there in reason to stop us? The idea of such a Being carries with it no absurdity; it is no more inconceivable than the idea of several independent limited Beings having among them power sufficient to produce and govern the universe. And surely it must appear vastly more *probable* that all things are under the dominion of *One*, than that a number of independent Beings (among whom there could be no possible subordination or any sort of relation or connection) should
all

all join in carrying on the operations of nature with that wonderful uniformity, regularity and constancy which we observe; and which Mr. Hume himself observes, and uses as an argument to overturn the *Manichean hypothesis* of two independent principles, one the author of good and the other of evil. (P. 220.) Indeed we cannot think this writer was serious in supposing it to be more probable that the universe was produced and governed by a multitude of independent deities than by one. But his great artifice, and what he laboured most, was to make his readers imagine that the supreme Being must be so utterly incomprehensible to us, that we must despair of arriving at any rational or consistent conclusion with regard to his nature and attributes.

As to his second objection: we grant that the *finite* phænomena of nature which fall under our cognizance can never *demonstrate*

monstrate their cause to be *infinite*. But that, in this case, the cause *must only* be proportioned to the effect, and therefore must be finite, is manifestly false. For as the cause here spoken of is allowed to be, not a mechanical or instrumental, but an intelligent and free cause, it is such a one as may, and in all probability does, produce effects much below what it is able to produce. And therefore we think it *most probable* that the Being, who was able to produce and govern that part of the universe which falls under our observation, is able to do every thing that can be done. We cannot conceive any thing too difficult for this Being; his power and intelligence seem to transcend our own, as it were, infinitely, and we cannot even in imagination distinguish between that power which he *must have* and power infinite or unlimited. Thus we see that these two objections of Mr. Hume's are so far from overturning the

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the proofs we draw *a posteriori* for the unity of the supreme Being, and the unlimited perfection of his power and intelligence, that they do not even *lessen* their probability.

In his third objection, he represents our arguments for God's moral attributes as having no appearance of probability. And he is quite confident that the mixture of evil with good in the phænomena of nature must, at least, prevent us from concluding that the author of nature is possessed of both infinite goodness and infinite power. "Epicurus's old questions," says he, are yet unanswered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" (Page 186.)

Again, "Why is there any misery at all in the world? not by chance surely.
"From

" From some cause then. Is it from the
 " intention of the Deity? but he is per-
 " fectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his
 " intention? but he is almighty. Nothing
 " can shake the solidity of this reasoning,
 " so short, so clear, so decisive; except we
 " assert that these subjects exceed all hu-
 " man capacity, and that our common
 " measures of truth and falsehood are not
 " applicable to them; a topic which I have
 " all along insisted on." (P. 194.) This
 objection he has endeavoured to enforce
 by a most horridly exaggerated account of
 the miseries of all the animated Beings on
 this globe. And the inference he would
 have us draw is this: " That as the opera-
 " tions of nature are carried on by an op-
 " position of principles, of pains and plea-
 " sures, of hot and cold, moist and dry,
 " light and heavy, the true conclusion is,
 " that the original source of all things is
 " entirely indifferent to all these principles,
 " and

" and has no more regard to good above
 " ill, than to heat above cold, or light above
 " heavy. And that by far the most pro-
 " bable hypothesis seems to be, that the
 " causes of the universe have neither good-
 " ness nor malice". (P. 221.) However I
 must observe that notwithstanding this
 confident way of writing, Mr. Hume can,
 at times, express himself more reasonably
 and moderately. In one place Philo, (for
 I cite only what is delivered by him) hav-
 ing spoken of some circumstances which
 give rise to most of the evils of human life,
 is candid enough to add: " What then
 " shall we pronounce on this occasion?
 " Shall we say these circumstances are not
 " necessary, and that they might easily have
 " been altered in the contrivance of the
 " universe? This decision seems too pre-
 " sumptuous for creatures so blind and ig-
 " norant. Let us be more modest in our
 " conclusions. Let us allow that if the
 " good-

“goodness of the Deity could be establish-
 “ed on any tolerable reasons *a priori* (he
 “means reasons not drawn from the nature of
 “his works) these phænomena, however
 “untoward, would not be sufficient to sub-
 “vert that principle; but might easily in
 “some unknown manner be reconcilable
 “to it.” (P. 218.) And in another place
 he says: “there are many inexplicable dif-
 “ficulties in the works of nature, which,
 “if we allow a perfect author to be proved
 “*a priori*, are easily solved from the narrow
 “capacity of man who cannot trace infi-
 “nite relations.” (P. 105.)

It is to be lamented that Mr. Hume did
 not condescend to take any notice of the
 arguments by which many eminent writ-
 ers have established the benevolence of
 the Deity not only from his works, but in
 the way here required, *a priori*, or from
 his nature, considering him as a supreme
 independent Being, possessed of an abso-
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lute power over all things, and completely and unalterably happy in the enjoyment of his own perfections. But unhappily Mr. Hume's turn of mind did not allow him to pay any regard to the arguments on that side of the question, though they certainly were not unworthy of his notice. He was a man of letters, and probably might have read Archbishop King's *Treatise on the Origin of Evil*, or such books as Boyle on *final causes*, Ray on the *Wisdom of God in the Works of the Creation*, and Derham's *Astro & Physico-Theology*, written to prove that the author of nature must be possessed of perfect benevolence; and as he was here writing to establish an opinion contrary to what, he must have known, these learned authors had maintained, it is very strange he should not have taken the least notice of the arguments by which they supported their opinion, or even framed his own arguments so, that they

might

might have appeared in some sort as an answer to theirs.

But as Mr. Hume chose to treat his subject in a desultory and declamatory, rather than an argumentative, manner, it was his business to keep other writers and their arguments out of sight, that he might have his reader, for the time being, all to himself*.

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* Archbishop King has shewn in a very satisfactory manner that all the evils incident to human life are perfectly reconcilable with both the infinite goodness and infinite power of our Maker. But his excellent treatise is very diffusive, and many of his arguments are founded on certain circumstances in the nature of man, and the dispensations of Providence towards him, which atheistical and deistical writers are not disposed to admit: I therefore think it would be of use, if we could bring the questions relating to this matter within narrower bounds, and get rid of the captious objections of Epicurus and Mr. Hume in a more summary way, by shewing that they are built entirely on one general principle, which, though the objectors always suppose it evidently true, is absolutely false, and that therefore their objections built upon it must fall to the ground. This I have attempted

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tempted

As it was proper on this occasion to shew how little weight there is in the objections that have been made to the argument *a posteriori*, which is applied to prove the existence, unity and absolute perfection of the supreme Being, I thought I could not do better than to consider these objections as they have been stated by Mr. Hume, who certainly did not want either inclination or ability to set them off to the best advantage. He is a celebrated writer, and has been thought one of our most formidable opponents: it may therefore be fashionable to read, and perhaps, to admire, this work of his; especially as he is known to have set a particular value upon it, by the provision he made in his will for having it published after his decease. And though he has written most part of this work in a man-

tempted in an *Essay on the Permission of Evil*, which may possibly appear as an Appendix to this work, if another edition should be called for.

ner between jest and earnest, no doubt he expected it would have a serious effect in promoting the cause of infidelity and scepticism in which he had laboured so long. For he has here openly inveighed against revealed religion under the title of vulgar and popular superstition, and endeavoured to remove the very foundation of natural religion by denying the probability of God's moral attributes. I know not how his admirers will be able to reconcile that wisdom and gravity of character they ascribe to him, with his having employed his talents, even to the last stage of life, in trifling so egregiously and so professedly on, what he acknowledges to be, the most important of all subjects, natural theology and religion. In the character of Philo he intended to exhibit to us a learned and acute sceptical philosopher; but his harangues are so inconsistent with each other that he gives us only the ~~idea~~ of a careless

young student, with a lively imagination, and an elegant flow of language, declaiming in a College-hall on the wrong side of a question.

Many pious and ingenious persons, though perfectly satisfied with the proofs for the existence and absolute perfection of the supreme Being, drawn from the works of the creation, have thought themselves well employed in devising arguments, drawn from other topics and considerations, which might lead to the same conclusion, and might prove it perhaps in a still more forcible manner. Hence arose another way of reasoning on this subject, usually called the *argument a priori*. The scholastic terms *a posteriori* and *a priori* are used to denote the two methods of arguing, one from the nature of effects to the nature of their cause, the other from the nature of a cause to the nature of its effects. The argument *a priori*, taken in this

this sense, cannot be applied to the present subject; for we cannot argue from any thing considered as a *cause* when we mean to prove the existence or the attributes of that Being who is the first cause of all things. Therefore when we speak of proving the being and attributes of God *a priori*, we must understand that term in a more comprehensive sense, as it denotes the common *synthetic* method of arguing, which is applicable to this as well as to most other subjects. In this method we lay down some evident principles or axioms, and from thence deduce other truths that are more complex.

And as the principles from whence we begin are *first* known to us, and in the order of our thoughts are *prior* to the truths deduced from them, we are said in this case also to argue *a priori*. This way of reasoning has been used by several authors, and it has been acknowledged that
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if demonstration can be attained on this subject, it must be by pursuing this method of reasoning.

The principal writers, and the latest I know of, who have cultivated this method of reasoning are Mr. Locke, Doctor Samuel Clarke, Doctor Fiddes and Mr. Wollaston. These were very learned men, and no doubt were well acquainted with what preceding authors had written on the same subject, and would not fail to adopt from them such arguments as they thought most for their purpose. The reader will therefore be sufficiently informed of the nature of this method of reasoning, and the progress that has been made in it, if I give him an account of the arguments that each of these eminent writers have advanced on this subject.

Mr. Locke, in the fourth book of his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, treats of our knowledge of the existence of a God.

As

As this book is well known, I shall only give the substance of what he says, using his own words as nearly as possible, and not omitting any thing that is material to his argument.

“As something does now exist, something must have existed always or from eternity, for *nothing* or mere non-entity could never have produced any thing. Again, there are in the world knowing intelligent Beings; but if there had ever been a time when no intelligent Being existed, when even the eternal Being was void of all understanding, it is impossible there should ever have been any intelligent Being at all. For it is impossible that things wholly void of knowledge, and operating blindly and without any perception should produce a thinking, knowing Being. It is manifestly repugnant to the idea of senseless matter, that it should put into itself sense, perception and knowledge, and we can as easily conceive

conceive matter to be produced by *nothing* as *thought* to be produced by mere matter, when before there was no such thing as thought or any intelligent Being existing. Thus it is evident that not only some Being, but some knowing intelligent Being must *necessarily* have existed from eternity. This discovery of an eternal mind, sufficiently leads us to the knowledge of God. Since it will hence follow that all other knowing Beings that had a beginning must depend on him, and have no other ways of knowledge or extent of power than what he gives them. And therefore if he made those he made also the less excellent pieces of this universe, all inanimate Beings; whereby his omniscience, power, and providence will be established, and all his other attributes necessarily follow."

Here our author goes on to shew that the eternal thinking Being cannot be *matter* or any system of matter however organized,

ganized, disposed or moved. He then continues his argument as follows.

“ But there are some who would have matter to be eternal, though they allow an eternal cogitative, immaterial Being. This though it takes not away the being of a God, yet since it denies the first great piece of his workmanship, the creation, let us consider it a little.

Matter, it is said, must be eternal, because we cannot conceive how it could have been created or made out of nothing. But we do not imagine ourselves to be eternal; we know that thinking substance within us, which we call *ourselves*, and which is distinct from those particles that compose our bodies, began not long since to exist, and therefore must have been brought into existence by some cause. If therefore we can allow a thinking Being to be made out of nothing, why cannot we also allow a material Being to be made out
of

of nothing? only that we have the experience of the one in our view, and not of the other. To say that we cannot admit it to be possible that any Being was made out of nothing, since we cannot possibly conceive *how* it was done, is very unreasonable. Because it is not reasonable to deny the power of an infinite Being because we cannot comprehend its operations. We do not deny other effects on the like ground, viz. that we cannot possibly conceive the *manner* of their production. It would be an over-valuing of ourselves to reduce all to the narrow measure of our capacities, and to conclude all things impossible to be done, whose manner of doing exceeds our comprehension."

This is the substance of what Mr. Locke, in his essay, has said in proof of the Being and attributes of God. And I suppose it will be allowed that this argument proves the existence of *some one* eternal, self-existent,

istent, intelligent, and powerful Being demonstratively; and that it proves to a very great degree of probability that this world owes its existence to such a Being. But to make out a complete demonstration on this subject, it remains to be proved, that there can be in the universe *but one* self-existent or unoriginated Being, to whom all other Beings or substances whatever must owe their existence. What were Mr. Locke's sentiments about making out such a demonstration we may see in his letters to Philippus à Limborek, professor of divinity among the remonstrants at Amsterdam. Mr. Locke had contracted an intimacy with that gentleman during his residence in Holland; he highly esteemed his learning and abilities, and corresponded with him on many important literary subjects till the time of his death.

Mr. Limborek in one of his letters tells Mr. Locke he had been lately in the company

pany of some learned men, where it was proposed as a question; by what argument may the unity of God be best demonstrated? and that a certain great personage in the company had desired him to write to Mr. Locke and request his opinion on this point. He intimates who this great person was, but his name is not mentioned: he appears to be of high rank in the state, and is called in these letters *vir primarius* and *vir magnificus*. And Mr. Limborck says he had been drawing up an argument on this subject for his own use, which made him so very desirous to know Mr. Locke's thoughts. He also tells Mr. Locke in another letter, what this great person desired was an argument which might prove;
 " That a Being who exists necessarily or is
 " self-existent can be *but one*; and that this
 " argument should be drawn from the na-
 " ture of *necessary existence*, and should
 " conclude (as they term it in the schools)
 " *a pri-*

“*a priori* and not *a posteriori*; that is, it
 “must be proved from the nature of ne-
 “cessary-existence that such kind of exist-
 “ence cannot be common to many Be-
 “ings.”

These letters of Mr. Limborck and Mr. Locke, though written on so important a subject, do not seem to be much known: I have not found them referred to by any writer but Doctor Clarke *, and he only cites a passage in one of Mr. Locke's letters, to shew that it is not improper to argue on this subject *a priori*, though he has taken that phrase in a sense different from what Mr. Locke did. As these letters are written some in Latin and some in French, I suppose a translation of such parts of them as relate to the present subject will be acceptable to my readers. We are to observe that, on this occasion, these writ-

* *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*,
 Page 503.

ers use the word *God* only as it denotes the person of *God the Father*, the supreme un-originated Being.

Mr. Locke to Mr. Limborck.

— “ The question you propose may be reduced to this: How may the unity of God be demonstrated? Or how can it be demonstrated that there is but one God? In order to resolve this question, before we come to prove the unity of God, it is necessary to know what is meant by the word *God*. The common idea, and I believe, the true idea, which they have of God who acknowledge his existence, is this: that he is an independent, eternal, infinite, incorporeal and all-perfect Being. This idea being once admitted it seems easy to deduce from thence the unity of God. In truth a Being who is all-perfect, or if I may so say, perfectly perfect can be but one; because

because an all-perfect Being cannot be deficient in any attribute, perfection, or degree of perfection, which it is better for him to have than to be without. For example, to have power is a greater perfection than to have none, and to have all power is a greater perfection than to have only some power; the same may be said of knowledge. This being laid down, two omnipotent Beings are incompatible."—

I omit the proof which our author gives for the unity of God from his *omnipotence*; or from his *omniscience*: because in this place he means by these terms a power to controul all other Beings in the universe, and an ability to know the thoughts of all others, and to conceal his own; which is plainly to presuppose the unity of God, or to include it in the definition given of him. I therefore pass on to a further proof which the author relies most on.

“ But

“ But if, to overturn the reasoning I have here used it should be said, that the two Gods, (or the two hundred thousand, for by the same reason that there may be two, there may be two millions, since there is nothing to limit the number), I say, if it be objected, that these many Gods have, each of them, a perfect omnipotence which is exactly the same, and also have the same knowledge, the same will, and exist equally in the same place; this is only to multiply the same Being, but at the bottom, and in the truth of the matter, it is to reduce the supposed plurality to a real unity. For to suppose two intelligent Beings who know, will, and do always the same thing, and who have not a separate existence, is to suppose a plurality in words, but in effect to affirm a real unity. For to be inseparably united in understanding, in will, in action, and in place is to be as much united as an intelligent

ligent Being can be united with itself. Consequently to suppose that where there is such an union there can be *two* Beings, is the same as to suppose a division without dividing, or a thing to be divided from itself." (Dated, Oates, April 2, 1698.)

Mr. Limborch to Mr. Locke.

"I received your letter, and immediately read it to the *great man*. He was then much engaged in business, but appointed another day when he had leisure to enter into a longer conference on the subject, which its importance seemed to require. He approves of your reasoning, upon the supposition that we are to admit the *definition* you give of God. For it is manifest that a Being who is absolutely perfect, or possesses all perfections, can be but one. But then he requires an argument *not drawn from a definition of God, but from our*

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natural

natural reason, and by which we may be led to a definition of God. His own demonstration he draws up according to this method. First, there is an eternal independent Being, who is self-existent, and exists by the necessity of his own nature. Secondly, there is but one such Being, and no more. Thirdly, this Being, because he is but one, contains in himself all perfections, and this Being is God. He says you have proved the first of these propositions exceedingly well in your *Essay on the Human Understanding*, and by the very same arguments he uses in his demonstration; so that you have just expressed his own thoughts. The more earnestly therefore does he desire to see the second proposition proved by you, which being strictly proved, the third will be easily deduced from the two former. The second, he says, is not proved, but pre-supposed, by all the divines and philosophers, and even by Des
 Cartes

Cartes himself. I do not doubt but he will communicate his proof to me; but, I believe, not till he has seen your argument and compared his own thoughts with yours. However who can doubt here, but that the order of these propositions should be changed, and that which is the third be made the second, and the second be made the third? That is, when it is proved there is an eternal, independent Being, it should next be proved that such a Being must contain in itself all perfections: for it cannot be, that any perfection should be wanting to an eternal, independent, self-existent Being. And this being proved, it may afterwards be inferred that there is but one such Being. But to this manner of disposing the propositions this objection is made. That we know of two natures or Beings essentially different from each other, thinking Beings and extended or material Beings. Now allowing that

there is an eternal self-existent thinking Being on whom we all depend, it might be said that matter was also eternal and self-existent, and yet it would by no means follow that matter must contain in itself all perfections. Wherefore it is necessary first to prove there can be *but one* self-existent eternal Being, before it can be proved that such a Being contains in itself all perfections *.

“ Though

* The objection here made to Mr. Limborck's manner of disposing the three propositions ought to have had no weight with these writers, for they all agree, that if we can either prove the absolute perfection, or the unity, of a self-existent Being, which ever of these is proved first, the other will follow of course. Indeed it seems strange that it should have been thought possible to prove that there can be *but one* self-existent Being without our first knowing what must be the nature and attributes of such a Being. Mr. Locke in his essay has shewn evidently, that *some* self-existent Being must have been eternally possessed of power and intelligence, as otherwise such attributes could never have come into existence. But yet till it is proved that *every* self-existent Being or substance,

“ Though it would be highly agreeable to an inquirer after truth to see it evidently demonstrated that there can be but one independent, self-existent Being; yet if that perhaps cannot be evidently demonstrated, the obligation and the excellence of religion would not be lessened on that account, as it is sufficiently evident that we depend upon one such Being only. This is the substance of what the *great man* said to me, as far as I apprehended his sentiments. He desired me to describe distinctly to you the kind of proof he requires, and bid me thank you most particularly for the trouble you have taken on his account. He is sorry to hear you are infirm, and would by no means engage you in subtle disquisitions that might fatigue

substance, *as such*, must have power and intelligence or some other attributes incompatible with the nature of *matter* it will be impossible to demonstrate that *matter cannot be a self-existent substance*.

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your mind. He wishes much for the establishment of your health, and if it will permit you to write your opinion as to the second proposition proposed to you in the manner it now is, you will greatly oblige him. You will judge yourself of his method, and of what answer it may be proper to give."

Mr. Locke to Mr. Limborch.

"Though my health should not safely permit me to indulge the desire I have of complying with the request of that great man who has so favourably received my reflections, imperfect as they were, yet I could not sacrifice it on a better occasion than that which leads me to examine the subject he has engaged me in, and which gives me an opportunity of shewing how ready I am to obey his commands. But I am not like to make any such sacrifice, for
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if I do not suffer in his good opinion, my health will not suffer by writing as I now do. Being to deal with a person who reasons so acutely and has gone so deeply into this subject, I need not use many words to make myself understood. His great penetration will let him see at once the bottom of the proof I am going to propose, and enable him to judge whether it be well or ill founded. I cannot but remark the accuracy of his judgment in the manner he has arranged his propositions, and it is true, as he well observes, that the divines, the philosophers, and Des Cartes himself have supposed the unity of God without proving it*. If by the question
as

* That is; the divines, philosophers, and Des Cartes by supposing the absolute perfection of a self-existent Being, without proving it, did thereby presuppose the unity of God. For it is here agreed that the absolute perfection of a Being implies or includes his unity. The proof given by Des Cartes of the
Being

as it was first proposed to me I had understood, as well as I now do, what was the aim of that able man, I would not have sent you the answer I did, but one more concise and more conformable to the order of nature and of reason, in which order every thing appears in its best light.

" I believe whoever makes use of his reflection will perceive evidently, and without the least doubt, that there has been from all eternity an intelligent Being. I believe also it is evident to every thinking man that there is likewise an infinite Being. Now, I say, there cannot but be an infinite Being, and that Being must be

Being and Attributes of God, which is here alluded to, is in substance this. We can conceive the existence of a self-existent, eternal and all-perfect Being; therefore such a Being is possible; but such a Being could not be *made* to exist by the power of any other Being; therefore his existence would be impossible, if he had not always actually existed: and consequently such a Being has always actually existed.

eternal.

eternal. Because that which is infinite must have been so from eternity: for any additions made in time can never render a Being infinite, who was not so in itself and from all eternity; it being the nature of an *infinite*, that nothing can be taken from it, or added to it. Hence it follows that an infinite Being cannot be divided, or be more than one. This is in my apprehension, a proof *a priori* that the independent, eternal Being is but one: and if we now add to this the idea of all possible perfections we have the idea of one God, self-existent, eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, &c.

“ If this reasoning of mine agrees with the sentiments of that excellent person, I shall be extremely pleased. And if it does not, I shall take it as a particular favour if he will be so kind as to communicate to me his proof, which I will keep secret, or divulge

divulge as coming from him, just as he shall think proper."

May the 21st, 1698.

Mr. Limborch to Mr. Locke.

" I have shewn your letter to the *great man*. He thanks you for the trouble you have taken, but however does not acquiesce in your reasoning. His method is, in the first place, to prove there is some one self-existent Being: secondly, that there is but one such: thirdly, that he contains in himself all perfections, and therefore is God. Now in your argument, you suppose it evident to every thinking man, that there is an infinite Being to whom nothing can be added, and from whom nothing can be taken away. But this is the same thing as to suppose that there is a Being every way perfect, which is his third proposition: so that you prove the second by

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presupposing the third; whereas the second should have been proved in its order, and then the third deduced from it. This was the reason why I would have had you consider whether the order of these propositions ought not to be changed, and the third made the second. But if you would follow his method, you must first shew that there can be but one self-existent Being, and then infer that this Being is infinite or all-perfect. He has not yet communicated his argument to me, and I doubt much whether he will do so."

Mr. Locke to Mr. Limborch.

"I beg you will, in my name, wait on the *great man*, and request he will be pleased to communicate to me his method of proving the unity of a self-existent Being, since my reasoning on that subject does not satisfy him. I should be unwilling

ling to impose on myself in a matter of so great importance, by resting on any fallacious or infirm foundation. If he knows any reasoning better or more firm, I beseech him candidly to impart it. If he would have it kept secret, you may promise for my silence. But if he does not grudge the world so great a benefit as it would be, I will publish it in the next edition of my book, which is shortly to come out, acknowledging, if he will consent, or concealing the author." Oct. 4, 1698.

Mr. Locke's request was not complied with; and from this time we find no mention of this subject in their correspondence, till about a year after, when Mr. Limborch writes " I hear nothing now of the
 " *great man*, nor do I expect any answer
 " from him. He seems rather to avoid
 " meeting me, perhaps because he thinks I
 " may press him for an answer: but I do
 " not

“ not intend to be importunate in urging
 “ a thing which he appears to decline.”
 To this person, and his proposed method
 of arguing, Mr. Locke plainly alludes in a
 letter to the reverend Mr. Bolde *, where-
 in he says; “ The proofs I have set down
 “ in my book, of one independent, eternal,
 “ infinite Being satisfy me. And the gen-
 “ tleman that designed others, and pre-
 “ tended that the next proposition to that
 “ of the existence of a self-sufficient Be-
 “ ing, should be this; that such a Being is
 “ but one, and that he could prove it an-
 “ tecedent to his attributes of infinity, om-
 * nipotence, &c. I am since pretty well sa-
 “ tisfied, pretended to what he had not;
 “ and therefore I trouble not myself any
 “ further about the matter.”

We see these learned writers, who had
 considered this subject so accurately, were

* See an account of Mr. Locke's life prefixed to
 his works.

both of opinion that the unity of a self-existent Being can never be proved until we first prove that such a Being must be infinite and all-perfect. The argument Mr. Locke uses to shew that if we suppose two Beings infinite and all-perfect, they will coalesce and be really but one, is liable to this objection: that he asserts two such Beings must always *will* and *do* the same things, or (as he expresses it) be united in *will* and in *action*. Now he had expressly included *freedom of will* among their perfections, which was right: therefore the assertion that they must *necessarily* will and do always the same thing cannot be admitted as a step in proving the unity or coalescence of these Beings. For, till it is actually demonstrated that these two supposed Beings cannot be really distinct from each other, we must suppose that each of them has a distinct will of his own, and that they may without interfering with each

each

each other carry on different designs and operations, all equally good and wise and suitable to their perfect power and wisdom. So that if the unity of these supposed Beings cannot be proved from the sameness or coincidence of *all* their *natural* attributes, it can never be proved from the supposed coincidence of their wills. I have mentioned this objection to Mr. Locke's manner of arguing on this point, that by considering it the reader may be better prepared to judge whether the like or other objections may be made to an argument, of a similar kind and on the same point, which he will find in the seventh proposition of the following tract.

From what has been laid down in the foregoing letters we may perceive that the synthetic method of reasoning on this subject consists entirely in demonstrating three propositions. First, that there must necessarily exist some one Being, at least,
 which

which is eternal and self-existent or unoriginated. Secondly, that a self-existent Being *as such* must necessarily contain in itself all possible and unlimited perfections. And thirdly, that there can be but one such Being in the universe. The first of these is usually considered as almost self-evident, and there has hardly ever been any dispute about it. Therefore in the account I am to give of the writers on this subject who were subsequent to Mr. Locke, I shall confine myself to what they have said in proof of the two last of these propositions. And that I may not swell this introduction too much, I shall give only the substance of their arguments, when I can abridge them without omitting any thing that is material.

Doctor Fiddes, in his work entitled *Theologia Speculativa or a Body of Divinity*, has given a pretty full account of the several kinds of arguments that have been used for proving the existence and attributes

butes of God. In his second chapter he treats of the synthetic way of reasoning on this subject, and has laid it down in a very just and methodical manner in six propositions, as follows: I. Something does now exist. II. Something has existed eternally. III. Something has been eternally self-existent. IV. What is self-existent must have all the perfections that exist any where, or in any subject. V. What is self-existent must have all possible perfections, and every perfection in an infinite measure. VI. What has all possible perfections in an infinite measure is God.

I need only recite what this author has said in proof of his fourth and fifth propositions. Prop. IV. *What is self-existent must have all the perfections that exist any where or in any subject.* "For since nothing can arise out of nothing, and since there can be no perfection but what has some

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subject

subject of inherence, every perfection must have been eternally somewhere or other, or in one subject or other, into which it must be ultimately resolved; or else it could never have been at all; without admitting, what of all things we are the least able to conceive, an infinite progression of efficient causes, that is, an infinite series of Beings derived one from another without a beginning or any original cause at the head of the series. So that whatever perfections we observe in any Being must have been originally and eternally in the self-existent Being."

To prove his fifth proposition, *That the perfections of a self-existent Being must all be infinite or unlimited*; he uses two arguments. "First, we have proved, says he, that there is some Being or other which has been eternally self-existent, and therefore have discovered one *infinite* attribute, at least, of this self-existent Being, that of
eternity.

eternity. The question now is, whether from one infinite attribute belonging to any subject, it will follow that all the other attributes of it must be infinite too? To this it is answered, that all properties essentially follow the nature and condition of the subject, and must be commensurate to it. For this reason we say, that wisdom, power, and goodness being attributes of an infinite subject, or one which is the substratum of one *infinite* attribute, these and all the other perfections belonging to it must be infinite also. Otherwise the same subject, considered as a subject, would be infinite in one respect and yet finite in another; which, if it be not a contradiction, seems to border so near upon one that we cannot comprehend the possibility of it."

Here I must observe that it is unusual and perhaps improper to call *existence* (whether it be temporary or *eternal*) an *attribute*.

bute. But if eternal existence implied *infinity*, the author might have argued more concisely than he does, and have said at once, that all the attributes or perfections of a self-existent Being must be *infinite*, as they all have the same eternity of *existence* that their subject has.

His second argument is this. "A self-existent Being as the subject of any perfection cannot limit itself; because it must necessarily have existed from all eternity what it is, and have been the same in all properties essentially inherent in it, antecedently to any act or volition of its own. Nor can such a Being be limited by any thing external to it; for, besides that self-existence necessarily implies independence, properties which are essential to any subject can admit of no increase or diminution or the least imaginable change, without destroying the essence itself of the subject. Nor yet can it be said that there is any
impos-

impossibility in the nature of the thing that the perfections inhering in an *infinite* subject should be in the highest or even in an infinite degree. Indeed it is scarce possible for us, (for the reasons already assigned) to conceive how they should be otherwise. Neither can any such impossibility arise from the nature of the perfections themselves. If then the perfections of a self-existent Being cannot be limited by itself, nor by any thing external to it, nor from any invincible repugnancy in the nature of the perfections themselves; I conclude that the self-existent Being must not only have all possible perfections, but every perfection in an *infinite* degree."

As to his sixth proposition, *That a Being who has all perfections in an infinite measure is God*; this, he says, needs no proof or illustration, for self-existence and all possible perfection being the primary characters of God, and included in the generally received

ed notion of him, to what Being soever we prove these characters to belong, we prove the same to be God. To this he subjoins the following paragraph.

“ After all, it may be perhaps objected,
 “ that what I have said in proof of a God,
 “ only proves, that all perfections must
 “ have had their original in *one* Being or
 “ *other*, and that from all eternity; but it
 “ does not prove they must all center in
 “ one, or that several perfections could not
 “ have been derived from several Beings
 “ which have existed eternally. To this
 “ I might answer in general, that my de-
 “ sign here is not directly to prove the
 “ unity of God; the proof of that I shall
 “ endeavour to make out afterwards in
 “ its proper place. It is sufficient to the
 “ confutation of Atheism, that there is
 “ some Being or Beings endowed with all
 “ those perfections, which are contained in
 “ the

“ the common idea men have agreed in
 “ concerning the divine Being.”

I do not transcribe what this author says in proof of the unity of God, as he only gives us such arguments, as we meet with in many other writers, and does not seem to think any of them demonstrative, but only presumptive and highly probable, and some of them he thinks are but weak. He concludes the chapter *, in which he treats of the unity of God, with an observation which I may properly enough insert here.

“ I have proposed, says he, these usual
 “ proofs of the unity of God, with that im-
 “ partiality which it becomes us always to
 “ observe in our search after truth. But
 “ to discover the weakness of any argument
 “ in particular which may be brought to
 “ prove a fundamental article of religion is

* Chap. VI. Book I. Part II.

“ not,

“not, as some pious men have too much
 “suspected, to do religion disservice, but
 “only shews it does not stand in need of
 “any artifices, and has nothing to fear
 “from a fair, ingenuous, and free exa-
 “mination.”

Mr. Wollaston in his ingenious work entitled, *The Religion of Nature delineated*, Sect. 5. treats of *Truths relating to the Deity, of his existence, perfection, &c.* Here he proves that there must be, at least, some one Being, who has in nature no superior or previous cause, and therefore must be eternal, unproduced, or self-existent, and necessarily-existent. In the fourth proposition of this section, he proves that this Being must be infinite or omnipresent. For, says he, “if there was any other Being able to limit him, he would be inferior and dependent and beholden to that Being for his being what he is, and for his not being confined within narrower bounds. Beside,

if his presence (whatever the manner of it is) was any where excluded, he would not be *there*, and if *not there*, he might be supposed to be *not elsewhere* and thus he might be supposed *not to be at all*." (This is much the same with Doctor Clarke's proof of the ubiquity). In the sixth and seventh propositions of this section, our author proves that a self-existent being must be all-perfect and can be but one, in a way that I believe is peculiar to himself.

Prop. VI. *He exists in a manner which is perfect.* "For he who exists of himself, and depends in no respect upon any other, and (as being a supreme cause) is the fountain of existence to all other Beings, must exist in the *uppermost* and *best* manner of existing. And not only so, but since he is *infinite* and *illimited*, he must exist in the best manner infinitely and illimitedly. Now to exist thus is infinite goodness of exist-

existence; and to exist in a manner infinitely good is to be *perfect*." (P. 70.)

In this proof the words, *as being a supreme cause and the fountain of existence to all other Beings*, ought to have been omitted; for they imply or presuppose the supremacy and unity of the self-existent Being, which the next proposition is designed to prove.

Prop. VII. *There can be but one such Being.* "That is, as it appeared by proposition the third, that there must be at least *one* independent Being, so now it appears that in reality there is *but one*. Because his manner of existence being perfect and *illimited*, that manner of being (if I may speak so) is *exhausted* by him, or belongs solely to him. If any other could partake with him in it, he must want what that other had, and be *deficient* and *limited*. Infinite and illimited inclose all. Or, if there could be *two* Beings each by himself

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absolutely

absolutely perfect, they must be either of the same or of different natures. Of the *same* they cannot be; because *both* being *infinite*, their existence would be coincident, that is they would be but the *same* or *one*. Nor can they be of different natures; because if their natures were opposite, or contrary the one to the other, being equal (both infinite and every where meeting the one with the other) the one would just *destroy* or be the *negation* of the other. And if they are supposed to be only different, not opposite, then if they differ as *disparates*, there must be some common *genus* above them, which cannot be; and however they differ, they can only be said at most to be Beings perfect in their respective kinds. But this is not to be absolutely perfect, it is only to be perfect in this or that respect, and to be only thus implies imperfection in *other* respects.”
(P. 70, 71.)

In

In the year 1704, Doctor Clarke was appointed to preach the Lectures founded by the honourable Robert Boyle, and shortly after published the substance of his sermons in a work entitled, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*. Though he wrote some years before Doctor Fiddes or Mr. Wollaston *. I have reserved the consideration of his work for the last, as it has been taken more notice of and occasioned more controversy than any other on that subject. With regard to this work the excellent Bishop Hoadly, in his account of the author's life and writings (prefixed to his works) expresses himself thus. "The necessary existence of
 " one only God, and the impossibility of
 " more than one, he justly esteemed the
 " *foundation* of all. This necessary unity

* The Dublin edition of Dr. Fiddes's work was printed in the year 1718. And the London edition of Wollaston's in 1725.

“ of the supreme Being appears through-
 “ out his writings to have been ever up-
 “ permost in his thoughts: a subject which
 “ though often excellently handled, and
 “ made as evident as any arguments and
 “ illustrations *a posteriori* could make it,
 “ yet had never, I think, been before at-
 “ tempted in the way of *strict demonstra-*
 “ *tion a priori*, which certainly is the
 “ strongest, and therefore the most desira-
 “ ble of *all* proofs, where it can be had.
 “ He undertook the task, and many of the
 “ best judges, after a great deal of confi-
 “ deration, have allowed that he has exe-
 “ cuted it in a masterly and satisfactory
 “ manner; with so much evidence indeed
 “ as generally to convince those who are
 “ capable of entering into this sort of ques-
 “ tions. I say *generally*, because I am sen-
 “ sible there are some very understanding
 “ persons who do not yet see this *evidence*
 “ so clearly as others do.”

This

This work of the celebrated Doctor Clarke, (which is in every one's hands) has been generally and justly esteemed on account of the admirable reasoning it contains on many points of great importance. In it the author has refuted the fallacious arguments of Hobbes and Spinoza, and fully proved that *thinking* and *willing* neither are nor possibly can be qualities or attributes of matter, or of any system of matter however disposed or organized. He has stated very clearly the true idea of free agency, and proved it to be essential to man and to every intelligent Being. And has deduced the moral perfections of God from his natural attributes of independence, supreme power and intelligence, in a clear and satisfactory manner. Therefore this useful work, as well as his other writings, will always be highly valued, and considered as an instance of that zeal with which he employed his great abilities in
supporting

supporting the important cause of religion and morality. But it now appears that his arguments have not given general satisfaction with regard to the principal point he laboured to establish, the unity of a first cause, or the existence of one only *original* author of all things. In this work the learned author shews that there could not have been an eternal succession of dependent Beings, each deriving its existence from the preceding one, without any original independent cause at the head of the series. From hence he infers that there must *necessarily* exist some one Being, at least, which is independent and underived or self-existent. He then proceeds to prove that this self-existent Being must be every where alike present, and can be *but one*: From whence it follows of course, that this Being, as the original fountain of all existence, must contain in himself all possible perfections. This, we see, is the method
of

of arguing that was proposed to Mr. Limborch and Mr. Locke, and which they judged to be impracticable. As our author grounds his arguments for the ubiquity and unity of a self-existent Being on a very peculiar explanation he gives of the terms *self-existence* and *necessary existence*, before I state or consider those arguments, it may be proper to remind the reader of the sense in which these terms are commonly understood, and have been always used by other writers.

By *self-existence* is usually meant nothing more than independent existence which a Being possesses in itself, without having derived it from the will and power of any prior cause. It is evident that every Being or substance must have had its existence either in itself or from the will and power of some other. But *how* or in what *manner* a Being can have its existence in either case, is to us equally inconceivable.

That

That is, we are just as unable to conceive *how* a Being can be *brought into existence* by the power of any cause, as *how* it could have had its existence always in itself and without any previous cause.

As to the meaning of *necessary existence*, logicians have long since determined that there are but two modes according to which any Being can be said to exist, or to be what it is; and these are *contingency* and *necessity*. Where the non-existence of a Being is possible, that is, where we can without a contradiction suppose it *not to exist*, that Being exists *contingently*, or contingency is the *mode* of its existence. But if there is any Being who demonstrably *must exist*, and whose non-existence is therefore impossible and inconceivable, that Being exists *necessarily*, or necessity is the mode of its existence. These modes are likewise applied to propositions; for a proposition is said to be true either contin-

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gently

gently or necessarily according as its falsehood is possible or impossible. The term *necessity* acquires different denominations according to the occasions on which it is applied. There is a *necessary* connexion between an efficient cause and the effect it produces, which is called *causal* and sometimes *physical* necessity. One truth may be inferred from another, or may be the necessary consequence of it: This is called *logical* necessity, and is what logicians mean by *necessitas consequentiæ*. In these and the like instances the necessity is called *relative*, because it is applied to some unalterable relation subsisting between two things. But if we can demonstrate that there is any Being or substance which cannot *but exist*, we find in that case its existence must be independent on all causes; and therefore we say its mode of existing is *absolute* necessity, because its existence does not depend on its having a
relation

relation to any other being or thing: and this is by some called *metaphysical* necessity. If we consider what this *necessary-existence* is in itself or in the Being to whom it belongs, we find it means such an existence as is absolutely permanent and indefeasible and can never possibly cease. Thus it will appear in every instance that the term *necessity*, or *necessary*, is used only to denote that the thing to which it is applied cannot possibly be otherwise than it is. *Necessity* is therefore nothing more than a *mode* of existence which is opposed to *contingency*; and these two modes only express the different *manners* according to which a thing may exist, but not the *cause*, or the *reason why*, it does exist. So that *necessity* can in no sense of the word be considered as the cause or even as the ground or reason of any existence or of any effect whatever.

We are now to consider the manner in which Doctor Clarke has explained the

terms *self-existence* and *necessary-existence*, and the use he makes of these explanations.

“ To be self-existent, says he, is not to
 “ be *produced by itself*, for that is an express
 “ contradiction, but it is, to *exist by an*
 “ *absolute necessity originally in the nature of*
 “ *the thing itself*. And this necessity must
 “ be *antecedent*, not indeed in time, to the
 “ existence of the Being itself because that
 “ is eternal, but antecedent in the natural
 “ order of our ideas to the supposition of
 “ its existence.” (Page 15. Edit. 10.)

To say that this Being exists by an absolute necessity in its own nature might do well enough to express the absolute impossibility there is of his not existing, if it meant nothing further. But we shall see that something further was meant by it, from what the author says in answer to a sixth letter wherein some objections had been proposed to his way of arguing.

“ Con-

" Concerning the nature of self-existence,
 " I explain myself thus. " Of every thing
 " that is, there is a *reason* which now does,
 " or once or always did, *determine the exist-*
 " *ence* rather than the *non existence* of that
 " thing. Of that which derives not its
 " being from any other thing, this *reason*
 " or *ground* of existence (whether we can
 " attain to any idea of it or no) must be in
 " the thing itself.—And as it is a plain con-
 " tradiction to suppose its own *will*, by
 " way of an efficient cause, to be the rea-
 " son of its existence; it remains that ab-
 " solute necessity (the same that is the cause
 " of the unalterable proportion between
 " *two* and *four*) be, by way of *formal* cause,
 " the ground of that existence. And this
 " necessity is indeed *antecedent*, though not
 " in *time*, yet in the order of nature, to
 " the existence of the Being itself." (Page
 489.) And to the same purpose he says,
 in his answer to a seventh letter, " Though
 " it

"it is indeed most evident, that no *thing*,
 "no Being, can be *prior* to *that Being* which
 "is the *first cause* and *original* of all things;
 "yet there must be in nature a *ground* or
 "*reason*, a *permanent* ground or reason, of
 "the existence of the *first cause*. Otherwise
 "its existence would be owing to and de-
 "pend on mere chance." And further;
 "The existence of the first cause is neces-
 "sary; necessary absolutely in itself, and
 "therefore *that necessity* is *a priori* and in
 "the order of nature the ground or reason
 "of his existence." (P. 498.)

Necessity is here represented as an intrinsic property or attribute of the self-existent Being, and such a one as is to be considered in the natural order of our thoughts (though not in time) as antecedent even to his existence, and also as the ground or reason *a priori* of his existence.

To this it has been objected, that no property, mode, or attribute can be in the
 natural

natural order of our thoughts *prior* to the existence of the subject to which it belongs. And as every property must depend for its own existence on the subject in which it inheres, it cannot be considered in any respect as a ground or reason *a priori* for the existence of its subject. We may also object to the propriety of saying, that an eternal self-existent Being required any thing to *determine* that he should exist *rather than not*, because it is proved that his non-existence is, at all events, impossible, so that his existing *rather than not* could not be the consequence of any *determination*.

As there could not have been any external or prior ground or reason for the existence of the first cause, some writers have contended, that it was improper to say his existence had *any ground* at all. But I cannot perceive any impropriety in saying, as our author does, that there must be
some

some *permanent ground* of his existence; though I do not think that assertion can answer the purpose he intended by it. For in the nature of the eternal self-existent Being there must be *something* which renders his non-existence impossible, and therein distinguishes his nature from that of every Being whose non-existence is possible. Whatever then is the *ground* of this important distinction, we may consider as the ground of his existence. But what *that something* is in itself, I may safely affirm, we shall never be able to comprehend or attain any idea of, or find any name for. It is such a principle of existence as probably no finite intelligence can comprehend. If we call this unknown ground of existence *absolute necessity*, as the phrase gives us no idea of what the thing is, it can only express what we knew before, that this Being is necessarily-existent, or cannot but exist; that is, it can only

only expresses the *mode* or manner of his existing. If indeed we could comprehend what the ground of his existence is, we might possibly be able to deduce from thence his other attributes, as well as his ubiquity and unity, but while the nature of it is utterly unknown we cannot draw any inferences from it. Let us now see what use is made of this assertion, that a self-existent Being must have some ground or reason of his existence.

It was solely for the purpose of proving the ubiquity and unity of a self-existent Being that our learned author so much insisted on, considering *necessity*, not merely as a *mode*, but as an *antecedent ground* of existence. And for that end he bestows on this antecedent necessity several very important epithets, as if it was some real Being or thing. He tells us, "it is original or eternal, simple, uniform, universal, and every where alike, without any possible

ble difference, difformity or variety; that it must *operate* every where alike; (P. 475.) And having no variation in kind or degree, cannot be the ground of existence of a number of Beings however similar or agreeing, as even *number* is in itself a manifest difformity or inequality of *efficiency* or *causality*."

This is the first proof our author gives for the unity of a self-existent Being in his seventh proposition (Page 47.) and his proof for the ubiquity of such a Being is founded on the same principle. But since in his *definition* of a self-existent Being this *necessity* was said to be originally *in the nature* of this Being itself; we must consider the description here given of *necessity* as a description of a fundamental part of the nature of this Being. And therefore to bring a proof from thence of his ubiquity and unity is not to *demonstrate* but rather to *define* or *gratuitously describe*, his nature
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to be such, that he must exist every where alike, and that he must exclude from existence any other Being of the like kind. So that this way of proving the ubiquity and unity of a self-existent or unoriginated Being consists, first, in defining this Being to be one which has an *antecedent necessity* as the ground of its existence; and then in describing the nature of this *necessity* to be such, that it must make the Being exist every where alike, and that it can be the ground of existence in but *One* Being only.

Our author has given another proof of the unity of a self-existent Being, in his seventh proposition, which is very different from the former, and seems to aim more directly at demonstration. It is as follows.

“ To suppose *two (or more) distinct Beings* existing of *themselves*, necessarily, and independent from each other, implies this
 “ plain

“plain *contradiction*; that *each* of them
 “being *independent* from the other; they
 “may *either of them* be supposed to exist
 “*alone*, so that it will be no contradiction
 “to imagine the other not to exist; and
 “consequently neither of them will be ne-
 “cessarily existing.”

Hitherto by a necessarily-existent Being was meant one who existed by an absolute necessity originally in the nature of the Being itself: but to make out this last proof a necessarily-existing Being must moreover mean one whose existence is *necessary*, that is *needful*, to the existence of all other things. And thus our author himself explains it in his answers to five letters written to him by a very ingenious person * who therein proposed objections to his

* Mr. Joseph Butler, afterwards Bishop of Durham, the celebrated author of the *Divine Analogy* and other much admired writings. See the life of Archbishop Secker, by Doctor Porteus, now Bishop of Chester.

proof of the ubiquity and also to his *second* proof of the unity of the self-existent Being.

“ Concerning the second difficulty, I
 “ answer, *That which exists necessarily, is*
 “ *needful to the existence of any other thing;*
 “ not considered now as a cause (for that
 “ indeed is begging the question) but as a
 “ *sine qua non*; in the sense as space is ne-
 “ cessary to every thing; and nothing can
 “ possibly be conceived to exist without
 “ thereby presupposing space. (Page 472.)
 “ Now space is a property or mode of the
 “ self-existent substance, but not of any
 “ other substance. All other substances
 “ are *in* space and are *penetrated by it*; but
 “ the self-existent substance is not *in* space
 “ nor penetrated by it, but is itself (if I
 “ may so speak) the *substratum* of space,
 “ the ground of the existence of *space* and
 “ *duration itself*, which (space and dura-
 “ tion) being evidently necessary, and yet
 “ them-

“ themselves not *substances* but *properties*
 “ or *modes*, shew evidently that the sub-
 “ stance, without which these *modes* could
 “ not subsist, is itself much more (if that
 “ were possible) *necessary*. And as space
 “ and duration are needful (i. e. *sine qua*
 “ *non*) to the existence of every thing else;
 “ so consequently is the substance to which
 “ these modes belong in *that peculiar man-*
 “ *ner* which I before mentioned.” (Page
 476.)

This is the substance, or the whole, of
 the reasoning our author uses to explain
 and confirm his second argument for the
 unity of a self-existent or unoriginated Be-
 ing. All the difficulties or objections pro-
 posed by his correspondent to this way of
 reasoning he has collected and stated very
 fairly and accurately in his answer to the
 fourth letter. “ The sum of the difficul-
 “ ties your letter contains is, I think, this:
 “ That it is difficult *to determine what rela-*
 “ *tion*

"tion the self-existent substance has to space;
 "that to say it is the substratum of space, in
 "the common sense of the word, is scarce in-
 "telligible, or at least is not evident; that
 "space seems to be as absolutely self-existent,
 "as it is possible any thing can be; and that
 "its being a property is supposing the thing
 "that was to be proved. This is entering
 "indeed into the very bottom of the mat-
 "ter; and I will endeavour to give you as
 "brief and clear an answer as I can." (P.
 481.) What our author says afterwards
 is only intended to illustrate and enforce
 his reasons for thinking that space is a *pro-*
perty, and, as such, necessarily infers the
 existence of *a substance* which affects none
 of our present senses. His candid corres-
 pondent says, in his fifth and last letter,
 "I must own my ignorance, that I am
 "really at a loss about the nature of space
 "and duration. But did it plainly appear
 "that they are *properties of a substance*,
 "we

“ we should have an *easy* way with the
 “ Atheists: for it would at once prove de-
 “ monstrately an eternal, necessary, self-
 “ existent Being; and that there is but one
 “ such; and that he is needful in order to
 “ the existence of all other things. Which
 “ makes me think that, though it *may* be
 “ true, yet it is not *obvious* to every capa-
 “ city; otherwise it would have been ge-
 “ nerally used as a fundamental argument
 “ to prove the Being of a God. *” (P. 484.)

Here this writer allows that if it could
 be plainly proved that space and duration
 were only properties or attributes of some
 substance, we might conclude against the
 Atheists that this substance must be the
 one supreme Being, the original author
and first cause of all things. But I very
 much doubt whether this argument of
 Doctor Clarke's can be made to answer

* These letters were written in the year 1713, and
 are printed in Doctor Clarke's works.

that

that purpose. For allowing its full force, it amounts only to this; that the self-existent substance which is the *substratum* of space and duration must, *on account of these attributes*, be needful to the existence of all other things as a *sine qua non*, in the same sense as space and duration are so. He says, that *to consider this substance now as a cause* (meaning an efficient cause) *would indeed be begging the question*; and yet he uses no arguments afterwards to shew that this substance is needful to the existence of every thing else in any *other sense* than as a *sine qua non*. Now since space and duration, though needful as a *sine qua non*, are not the efficient cause of any thing, how does it appear that their *substratum* must be needful, not only as a *sine qua non*, but also as a real *efficient cause* of all things? How is it proved that *this substratum* must be the only self-existent substance in the universe? It would in-

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deed

deed be a contradiction in terms to say; that a self-existent Being required an *efficient cause* of its existence: but what contradiction would follow from saying, that a self-existent Being might require space, duration, and their substratum as a coexistent *sine qua non*, when this *sine qua non* is such as must *necessarily* exist, or cannot fail to exist, and therefore can never be *wanting* to whatever thing it is needful for? To make our author's argument answer the intended purpose, it ought to be proved, that some inconsistency or contradiction would follow from supposing that a Being could be self-existent, and could exist in space, (as other things do) without being its *substratum*. Therefore till this is proved, though it should be granted that space and duration must have a self-existent substance to inhere in, I apprehend we cannot *from thence* conclude against the Atheists, that this substance must be the first *efficient*

efficient cause of all things, or must be *that one supreme Being* to whose *will* and *power* all other Beings owe their existence.

This notion that space and duration are attributes of a self-existent substance Doctor Clarke seems to have borrowed from Sir Isaac Newton, who says in his *scholium generale*; *Deus—non est duratio vel spatium sed durat & adest, & existendo semper & ubique durationem & spatium, eternitatem & infinitatem constituit.* These words Doctor Clarke has quoted, but he has not explained them, or told us what we are to understand here by the term *constituit*. If I have been right in remarking, that an argument for proving the existence and unity of the supreme Being cannot be drawn, as Dr. Clarke imagined, from what he has affirmed of space and duration; his notion of their having a *substratum* can be of no great importance, or much worth disputing about. Yet it occasioned a very

long and intricate controversy between him and Mr. Leibnitz. That gentleman and other writers * have gone so far on the opposite side, that they deny the reality of space and duration, and consider them merely as abstract ideas relating to the order and situation of bodies, and the successive existence of created things. Every one must wish that the great point, *the proof of a God*, should be kept as clear as possible from all metaphysical subtleties and difficulties. And therefore it is greatly to be regretted that it ever was involved in those dark and abstruse disquisitions concerning the abstract nature of space and duration, which do not seem to be more particularly connected with it, than they are with many other subjects. I cannot help thinking all such disquisitions are unnecessary and useless; for I believe no

* See Law's *Enquiry into the Ideas of Space, Time, &c.*

one ever found himself at a loss to apprehend the force of an argument wherein *space* and *time* were mentioned, for want of knowing the meaning of these terms; provided they were mentioned, as they usually are, without any *explanation*.

The account I have here given of what has been done by four learned writers towards demonstrating the Being and attributes of God, in the synthetic method of reasoning, and the remarks that have been made on their several arguments, will let the reader see what are the points proposed to be proved, and the different lights in which the subject has been considered, and will make him thoroughly acquainted with this method of reasoning. From hence he will be fully able to apprehend and judge of the following argument, and perceive how far it is conclusive, or to what objections it is liable.

The

The arguments proposed by Mr. Locke, Doctor Fiddes, and Mr. Wollaston are not *strictly demonstrative*; but as strongly presumptive and probable arguments, I believe, they have not been controverted. Doctor Clarke's argument, which aims at strict demonstration and is founded on new and abstruse principles, gave occasion to a very long and learned controversy, that has carried this subject through all the depths of metaphysics.

I have already mentioned the controversial letters that are printed in Doctor Clarke's works; as are also those that passed between him and Mr. Leibnitz, which were written in the year 1716. In the year 1726, Doctor Gretton published a *review of the argument a priori*, condemning entirely, as I understand, Doctor Clarke's method of reasoning on this subject. And shortly after Mr. Edmund Law (now Bishop of Carlisle) a learned and able
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metaphysician, published a translation of Archbishop King's *Treatise on the Origin of Evil*, with copious notes, and extracts from many eminent writers, in which we find several weighty objections to Doctor Clarke's argument. Mr. Jackson, a clergyman, gave an answer to these objections in a work entitled, *The Existence and Unity of God proved from his nature and attributes*; and Mr. Law replied in *An Enquiry into the ideas of space, time, immensity and eternity; and also the self-existence, necessary-existence and unity of the divine nature*. I have not seen Doctor Gretton's or Mr. Jackson's book, nor the works of some others who wrote on the subject of this controversy, and which are referred to by Mr. Law. His *Enquiry into the ideas of space, &c.* was printed in the year 1734, and there is annexed to it, *A Dissertation on the argument A PRIORI, for proving the existence of a first cause. By a learned hand;*
in

in a letter to Mr. Law. This dissertation, as I am well informed, was written by Doctor Waterland. In his first chapter he has given an historical view of the question, and collected the opinions of more than twenty eminent writers, divines, metaphysicians and logicians, from Clemens of Alexandria down to Archbishop Tillotson; all of whom, he shews, have condemned as impracticable and improper any attempt to prove the Being and attributes of God *a priori*, that is, from any thing considered in the light of a *cause*, *ground* or *reason* of his existence, or in any respect *antecedent* to his existence. This way of arguing, as it has been used by Doctor Clarke, this author calls arguing *a priori* in the *gross* sense of the word; and he carefully distinguishes it from the common synthetic method of arguing, which he allows may properly be applied to this subject, so far as it will go, and may also

in a proper sense be called arguing *a priori*, if, says he, that term was worth disputing about.

This writer frequently admits (as many others have done) that the argument *a posteriori* does not, strictly speaking, *demonstrate* the unity of the first cause, but proves it to such a high degree of rational and moral probability as must satisfy all reasonable unprejudiced persons. With regard to this point he expresses himself thus.

“Allowing that the *natural* proofs of the
 “unity are probable only, not demonstra-
 “tive, and that upon the foot of mere
 “reason it is a tenet rather to be reckoned
 “among the *pie credibilia* than as a *de-*
 “*monstrated* truth; this is saying no more
 “than what several very wise and good
 “men have made no scruple to confess.
 “And if such be really the case, we are
 “the more obliged to Scripture for ascer-
 “taining to us that great truth, as well as
 “for

“ for placing it in a clear and just light.
 “ *Demonstrations*, strictly so called, are very
 “ good things where they are to be had;
 “ but when we cannot come at them,
 “ strong probabilities may properly supply
 “ their place.” (P. 77, 78.) There are
 other passages in *the Dissertation* to the
 same purpose.

This author, though he admits the propriety of reasoning *a priori*; that is *synthetically*, on this subject, yet thinks it cannot carry us far towards a demonstration of the unity and perfections of the supreme Being. He gives several instances of attempts that have been made in that way and have failed of their purpose, and apprehends that ill consequences have arisen from such failures. He endeavours to show the necessity of confining ourselves to the common way of arguing *a posteriori*, and speaks so discouragingly of our pursuing other methods in hopes of making them demonstrative,

strative, that it is more than probable I would not have undertaken the following argument, had it not been drawn up before I read *this Dissertation*, which I happened not to meet with till it was sent to me by a learned friend some time after he had perused my manuscript.

It must have been owing to such considerations as this writer has suggested, that the synthetic method of reasoning on this subject has fallen into discredit, and seems now to have been laid aside for more than half a century. From hence I must expect that an attempt to revive this method of reasoning, with a view to demonstration, will be received with some sort of prejudice. And therefore, in hopes of removing that prejudice, I shall state fully what this writer has said in support of his opinions, and then give my reasons for not entirely agreeing with him, and for thinking that demonstrative arguments on this subject

subject ought not to be altogether despair-
ed of.

“ It may be of ill consequence,” says
this learned author, “ to rest any *important*
“ and unquestionable truth upon *precari-*
“ *ous* principles too weak to support it. It
“ tends to *expose* rather than *serve* the cause
“ so pleaded; to render it *suspected* rather
“ than to bring *credit* to it; and to give
“ the adversaries a handle for ridicule or
“ triumph. One would not indeed alto-
“ gether discourage any religious and well-
“ meant endeavours to strike *new* light into
“ an important subject, and confirm esta-
“ blished truths by additional topics or sup-
“ plemental reinforcements. And were
“ there not scope given for essays and trials
“ which may happen to fail (as all cannot
“ hit) we should scarce have field large
“ enough for those that might be approv-
“ ed and stand. Nevertheless in truths
“ which have already passed through an
“ infinite

“ infinite number of hands (such as is the
 “ existence of a Deity) there is the less oc-
 “ casion for looking after *new* topics.
 “ Probably there are no *new* ones now to
 “ be thought on, after the utmost stretch
 “ of human faculties has been long exer-
 “ cised upon the subject; but those that
 “ appear *new* will be found no other than
 “ old exploded speculations.—Or if there
 “ should be any *new* topic invented, it will
 “ probably be found much short in value
 “ and efficacy of the more common ones,
 “ which have been of long standing. The
 “ *commonest* arguments, in such cases, may
 “ be justly looked upon as the *best*. The
 “ more important a cause is, the more need
 “ of caution; because there is a particular
 “ reverence due to such a cause, and the
 “ risk is the greater, if it be made to lean
 “ on quirks and subtleties, on weak and
 “ sandy foundations. Now there cannot
 “ be a more important cause than the cause
 “ of

“ of *Theism*; neither can we any where
 “ more dangerously give a loose to fancy
 “ than upon that head.” (P. 86. 88.) —
 “ Mischief is often done by pretending to
 “ strict and rigorous *demonstrations* where
 “ we have no occasion for them, and where
 “ the subject is *too sublime* to go far in with
 “ clear and distinct ideas. Such attempts
 “ serve only to make *that* become matter
 “ of question which before was *unquestion-*
 “ *able*, while standing only on *reasonable*
 “ presumption and moral proof.” (P. 73.)

I must agree with this author that we
 cannot be too cautious in what we ad-
 vance when arguing on a subject of the
 utmost importance: And if by *inventing*
new topics on this occasion, he means mak-
 ing new discoveries with regard to the na-
 ture and attributes of the Deity, I entire-
 ly agree with him that no such thing can
 now be thought of, or ought to be attempt-
 ed. But I do not see that any ill conse-
 quences

quences can arise from our offering new proofs on this subject, that is, proofs formed on old received ideas newly arranged in such manner as we imagine will place these proofs in a light in which they will appear not only probable and presumptive, but strictly demonstrative. For if ever so many of these proofs should fail, and be found not so strictly conclusive as they pretend to be, they can fail only for themselves; they cannot invalidate, or render more questionable, former proofs that are not built upon them or connected with them: therefore they cannot lessen the force of those highly probable and presumptive proofs on which the great cause of *Theism* has maintained its ground, and ever will do so, in the minds of all thinking unprejudiced persons.

We find by sad experience that there is a number (which seems to be increasing) of prejudiced, conceited, careless persons
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who are averse from listening to any important truth which, as it ought to influence their practice, may sometimes alarm their fears. Such men affect to place all wisdom and all philosophy in doubting, and withholding their assent to any conclusions on this subject that do not appear demonstrative, and are perpetually inventing *new topics* and metaphysical objections against the arguments hitherto used for proving the unity and absolute perfection of the supreme Being. Now though almost all the objections they have thrown out of late are old ones, that have been often answered; and are only glossed over with an appearance of novelty; yet it is allowed that we ought to take some notice of them, and give them fresh answers adapted to the new appearance they put on. In doing this, we are naturally led to try if we can push on our former proofs to that demonstration our opponents are incessantly calling

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ing for: and if our failure in such attempts cannot do any real injury to our cause in the minds of reasonable people, I think we should leave no species of argument untried that may possibly enable us to answer the demands of our opponents, and lead us further to *know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed*, (Luke i. 4.) and make us more *ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us*. (1 Peter iii. 15.)

As to our author's other objection, that *this subject is too sublime to go far in with clear and distinct ideas*: several divines have indeed expressed themselves much to the same purpose, and represented it as unreasonable, and almost absurd, to expect we should attain what might be called *strict demonstration*, when we argue concerning the nature of *that Being* whose attributes are infinite and incomprehensible. This objection, and the expressions used on this

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occasion,

occasion, require to be particularly considered and explained; especially as atheistical writers have taken an unfair advantage from the manner in which some divines have spoken of our inability to comprehend the nature of the supreme Being. Of this we have an instance in Mr. Hume, who, in his *Dialogues on natural Religion*, has introduced a silly character (whom he calls a man of rigid, inflexible orthodoxy, P. 10.) merely for the purpose of making him declare: "That he might cite almost
 " all the divines from the foundation of
 " christianity, who have treated of this or
 " any other theological subject, to prove,
 " that the nature of God, from the infir-
 " mities of the human understanding, is
 " altogether incomprehensible and unknown
 " to us—that even when we ascribe to him
 " *thought and reason* (which it is but pious
 " to do) we ought to acknowledge that the
 " meaning of those terms is, in that case,
 " totally

“ totally incomprehensible—that the in-
 “ firmities of our nature do not permit us
 “ to reach any ideas which in the least cor-
 “ respond to the ineffable sublimity of the
 “ divine attributes.—It is profaneness to
 “ attempt penetrating into these sacred ob-
 “ scurities, and next to the impiety of de-
 “ nying his existence is the temerity of
 “ prying into his nature and essence, de-
 “ crees and attributes.” (P. 43. 84. 42.)

The reader will easily guess what use Mr.
 Hume makes of such concessions from one
 said to be an orthodox divine: and he may
 also observe how artfully the author endea-
 vours to confound our rational inquiries
 into the attributes of God, with the teme-
 rity or absurdity of prying into his essence
 and decrees. Many instances of the like
 dissingenuousness occur in this work.

Now while we acknowledge that the
 nature of the supreme Being must be, in
 many respects, incomprehensible by any

finite understanding, we must at the same time allow it is, in some measure or in some sense, comprehensible even by us. For otherwise we must admit, that we have no idea at all of God, that *we worship we know not what*, and are unable to give any consistent, intelligible definition of that *great Being* whom we make the subject of our inquiries and arguments.

But surely this is not the case: for all who believe in one first and original cause of all things, agree in conceiving him to be *an uncaused, independent, eternal, immutable and incorporeal Being, possessed of power, knowledge and goodness in their utmost extent*. Now all the ideas contained in this definition are clear, distinct, abstract ideas, perfectly consistent with each other: and in forming the definition of this Being no uncertain *degrees* of qualities and powers are to be estimated or guessed at; no allowances are necessary to be made for any
probable

probable or possible changes in the thing defined; so that nothing is included in it but what is fixed and immutable. We do not indeed pretend to form an *adequate* idea of any Being or substance, much less of the supreme Being; nor is it necessary for our purpose that we should do so. We are able to give so plain and intelligible a definition of him, that no one can be at a loss to know what is meant when we say *there is a supreme Being*. And to prove that some one Being, such as is here defined, does really exist, and that there can be but one such, is all we aim at: and since all divines allow we can prove this to the highest degree of probability or moral certainty, both by arguments *a posteriori* and *a priori*, that is, both by the analytic and the synthetic method of reasoning, they must admit that our ideas on this subject are sufficiently *clear* and *distinct* for all the purposes of such a proof. Now
if

if we have ideas clear and distinct enough to carry us to a proof so cogent that it falls short only of demonstration, must it not seem probable that they may enable us to go a little further and attain demonstration itself? Especially as it may be easily shewn that the truths relating to this subject (being necessary, eternal and immutable truths) are in themselves or in their own nature capable of demonstration*.

Thus in answer to what the author of *the Dissertation* has suggested, I have endeavoured to make out the following particulars: That though several arguments offered as conclusive on this subject, should be found inconclusive, yet the failure of such cannot be *reasonably* thought to affect the validity or force of others founded on quite different principles: that it is not

* See this point explained in Prop. II. Corol. 2. of the following Treatise.

dangerous,

dangerous, and may be very useful, to consider this subject in different lights, and to propose arguments of various kinds: that there is nothing unreasonable or presumptuous in hoping they may be made demonstrative, by continued study and repeated attempts: and therefore that we should be cautious not to conceive a prejudice against an argument *because* it aims at demonstration.

A few years ago some Treatises were published, written on the principles of materialism, which, in my opinion, tend to give us very false and unworthy notions of the supreme Being; though I am persuaded their author never supposed they could have any such ill tendency. About the same time was published Mr. Hume's *Dialogues concerning natural Religion*; a complete promptuary of scepticism and atheism, and plainly designed to bar up
every

every avenue that can lead to the proof of one all-perfect author of the universe.

From reading these books I conceived an earnest desire to see the important question concerning the Being and perfections of God treated in some concise, and if possible, demonstrative manner. On considering the subject I was soon satisfied that the truths relating to it were to be ranked among those that are in their nature capable of demonstration. And then the principal ideas that relate to it, such as, existence, independence, immutability, power, intelligence and goodness (considered without reference to any limits or degrees) appeared to me to be as clear and abstract ideas as any we have, even as our ideas of mathematical quantities and proportions. These considerations led me to conceive it might not be impossible, and surely it would be well worth our pains

pains and study, to devise some method, some arrangement, or what Horace calls *series juncturaque*, by which our commonly received ideas on this subject might be so compared together, that the necessary connections or relations between them should appear with intuitive evidence throughout, so as to exhibit a chain of demonstrative reasoning.

To accomplish this purpose there could be no occasion to look for what might be called new ideas or new topics on the subject: and I may venture to affirm that in the following argument there is not any thing advanced, respecting the nature of the *supreme Being*, but what the most esteemed writers have proved, endeavoured to prove, or taken for granted. The greatest part of the proofs adduced for the propositions the learned reader will recognize as being, in substance, what he has met with before.

before. So that nothing new will be found here except merely the manner of arranging the propositions and of forming the proofs.

After so many arguments as have appeared on this important subject, I would not have submitted the following one to the consideration of the public had it not been approved of by some persons much esteemed for their learning and candour, whom I have the honour to call my friends. And though it should not be found strictly demonstrative, it may contain some useful matter, and perhaps furnish hints and materials for future arguments that may be more conclusive. As to the doctrinal part of my argument I can have no scruples, since it contains nothing but what is expressly taught by the holy Scriptures. They are our best guide in every thing, and they plainly set forth

forth one only underived, unoriginated Being, the *God and Father of all*, the original fountain of all existence, whom they declare to be eternal, omnipresent, and possessed of all possible perfections natural and moral. To prove this most important truth, this first article of our creed, and foundation of all our faith, in a demonstrative manner, is what I have attempted: indeed it is all, on the subject of theology, that the method of arguing I have adopted is capable of proving. In the course of this argument I have avoided all abstruse metaphysical disquisitions, and endeavoured to express myself in the plainest terms, hoping this little treatise may be easily understood and read with advantage by young persons and others not versed in theological controversies, and may contribute to preserve them from imbibing those false
and

and pernicious notions which the metaphysical writings of Sceptics and Materialists are apt to instil.

As our argument is built chiefly on one principle, which I have laid down as an axiom, it is proper to say somewhat of it here, that the reader may more fully perceive its meaning. The axiom is this: "Whatever is contingent, or might possibly have been otherwise than it is, had some efficient cause which *determined* it to be what it is." Or in other words: "If two different or contrary things were equally possible, which ever of them took place, or came to pass, it must have done so in consequence of some efficient cause which *determined* that it, and not *the other*, should take place." The truth of this is so evident that we cannot find any principle *more* evident by which we may prove it. It runs through
our

our reasonings on many subjects, in which we should make little or no progress if we did not assume this as a self-evident axiom. Whenever we perceive that a thing might have been otherwise than it is, we *naturally* inquire for the *cause* which made it to be what it is. But when we are sensible that a thing is *necessarily such as it is*, we never inquire for the *cause* that *made* it to be what it is, for we reckon it absurd to ask *why* a thing *is so*, when we see there was no possibility of its being *otherwise*. This shews that *contingency* implies, and that *necessity* excludes, *causality*. If it be said that some things are determined to be what they are by *chance*, I answer, that in this case chance is as real and efficient a *cause* as any other: for it means a *cause* which, in its operation, is not directed by *design* to produce the particular effect it does,
rather

rather than some other effect. Thus most effects or events brought about by human operations are attended with some unforeseen and undesigned circumstances and these we ascribe to *chance*, meaning that they were produced, not without a *cause* but, without a *design*. So that chance is always opposed to design: and this seems to be the only sense in which the word *chance* can be used with any meaning; except when it is used instead of the word *probability*; as when we say, there is *a great chance*, or there is but *little chance*, that such an event will happen.

Most of the following Propositions are demonstrated *indirectly*, that is, they are proved to be true, by shewing that an absurdity or contradiction would follow from supposing them to be false. From the
nature

nature of the subject they will admit only of a proof of this kind, which, though it is not so pleasing to the mind, is however just as valid as a *direct* demonstration.

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C O N T E N T S

OF THE FOLLOWING

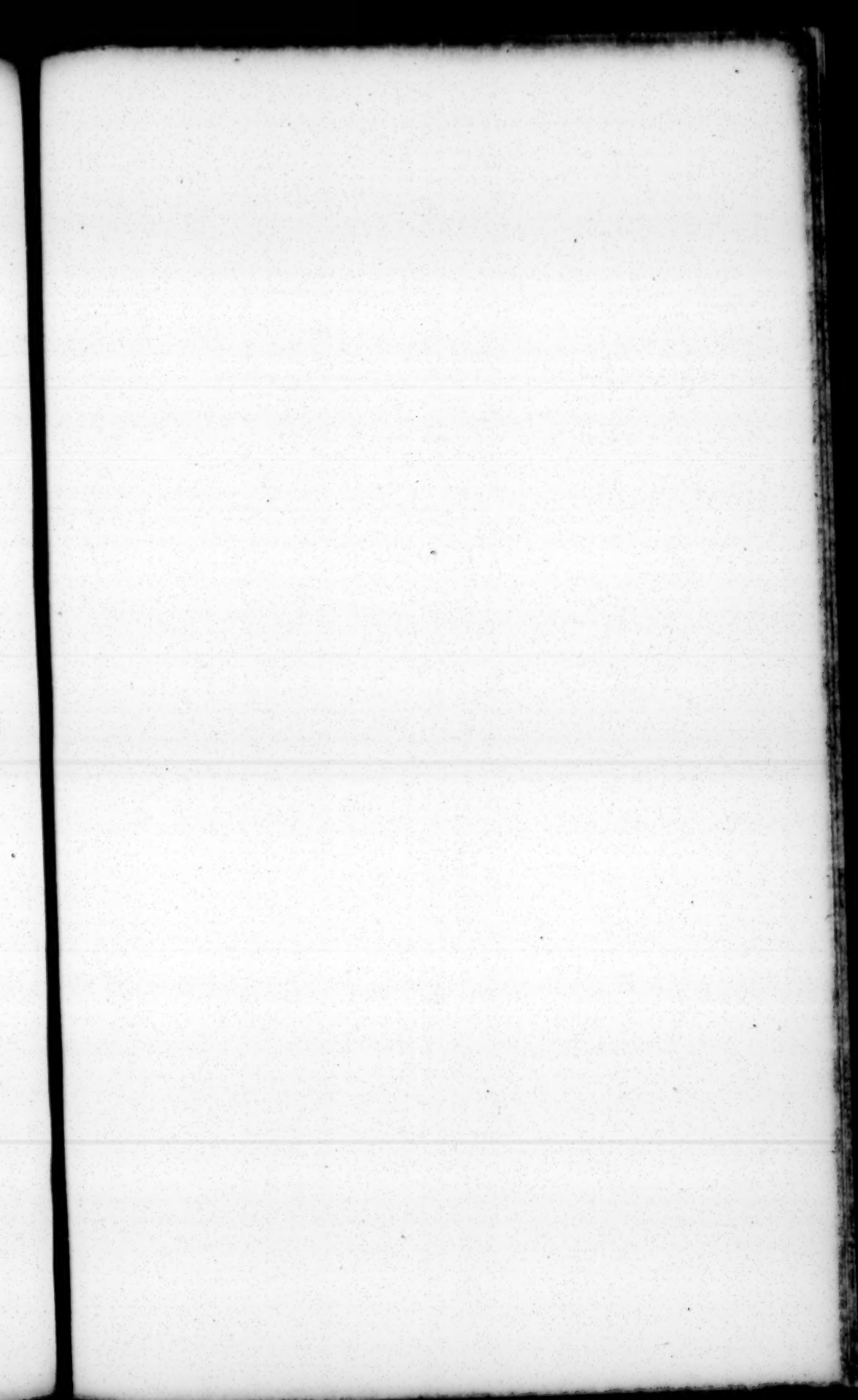
T R E A T I S E.

*T*HERE must be some one Being, at least, who is unoriginated and has existed without a cause, without a beginning and cannot cease to exist.—There is nothing in the nature of this Being that could possibly have been otherwise than it is.—He is impassive.—Truths relating to his nature are as capable of strict demonstration as any other truths.—All the attributes he possesses are unlimited or perfect.—He exists every where in the same manner he does any where.—He is an individual substance, without parts, every where identically the

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same.

same.—He is possessed of power and knowledge unlimited and all other natural attributes that can be called absolute perfections.—He is a Maximum of existence.—But one unoriginated Being in the universe.—All things owe their existence to his power operating according to his will.—The unoriginated Being is the God and father of all.—And is possessed of goodness, mercy, justice and all other moral perfections, such as become the supreme author and governor of the universe.



A N A X I O M.

Whatever is contingent, or might possibly have been otherwise than it is, had some cause which determined it to be what it is. Or in other words: if two different or contrary things were each of them possible, which ever of them took place, or came to pass, it must have done so in consequence of some cause which determined that *it*, and not *the other*, should take place.

A N
A T T E M P T
T O

Prove the Existence, &c.

PROPOSITION I.

THERE must be in the universe some one Being, at least, whose non-existence is impossible, whose existence had no cause, no beginning, and can have no end.

If there is no Being in the universe but such as might possibly have *not existed*, it
would

would follow that there might possibly have been no existence at all. And then these two cases, viz. that there might, and that there might not have been existence, being equally possible, the former could not have taken place rather than the latter, but in consequence of its having been *determined*, by some means or other, that it should take place. (*Axiom.*) But this determination could never have been made, unless some Being could have determined its own existence and have been the cause of itself; which it would be absurd to suppose. Therefore it is not possible that there might have been no existence at all. Consequently an impossibility of *not existing* must be found somewhere, that is, there must be some one Being, at least, whose non-existence is impossible. And as this impossibility of his *not existing* is absolute, or unconditional and depends not on any supposition, it must be at all times

times the same : so that this Being never *was* nor can *become* non-existent, but has an existence without a beginning and without a possibility of ending *.

As no *cause* could have *determined* that this Being should exist, or have *given* to him that existence which it is impossible but he must always have had ; he must be unoriginated and have existence in himself independent on any cause, or be self-existent.

Thus it is proved, that there must be, at least, some one Being, whatever it is, who cannot but exist, whose existence had no cause, no beginning, and can have no

* This argument, which proves there is some Being whose non-existence is impossible, depends not on any relation that such Being may have to others, or on any previous condition or supposition whatever ; it is deduced entirely from this truth, *that something does now exist*, which is indisputable and is *prior*, in the order of our thoughts, to all other truths.

end.

end. And since this Being is such that his non-existence is impossible, he does not exist contingently but necessarily: *necessity* is the *mode* of his existence.

It need not now be considered whether there is only one such Being, or whether there may be in the universe many Beings each unoriginated and having existence in itself independent on any cause. It is sufficient, at present, that we know there must be one such Being, whose nature we may therefore make the subject of our further enquiries.

OBSERVATION.

Two hypotheses only, and these directly contradictory to each other, have been contrived to shew that we can conceive the universe might possibly have existed, without any one original, independent Being, from whom all others have derived their existence.

The

The ancient atheistical hypotheses was: That the universe consists entirely of derived and dependent Beings, each of which owed its existence to the power and efficiency of the one that immediately preceded it, in an infinite series or succession without a beginning, and without an original underived cause at the head of the series. Several writers have shewn the weakness and inconsistency of this hypothesis*. I think it may be easily refuted from hence. When a Being is considered as brought into existence by some other, it is plainly *possible*, or there is no *contradiction* in affirming, that it might not have been brought into existence, but have been left to remain non-existent as it was before. Now, according to this hypothesis, there is no Being in the universe that was

* See particularly Dr. Clarke's Demonstration, p. 11—15. Edit. 10th. And Mr. Wollaston's Religion of Nature delineated, p. 65—68. 4to. Edit.

not *brought into existence* by some other; and therefore it follows that there is *no Being* but such as might possibly *not have existed*. But this leads to an absurdity, as was shewn in the proof of the preceding proposition.

The other hypothesis is that of Spinoza, which I mentioned in the Introduction, and which has been lately adopted by a French writer *. According to this hypothesis, no Being in the universe hath derived its existence from another, but every Being or substance, like the one described in the preceding proposition, is necessarily-existent, eternal, and uncaused or unoriginated.

As these modern atheists agree with us in the truth of our first proposition, the great question between them and us may be brought into a narrow compass and re-

* See an atheistical treatise entitled, *Système de la Nature*.

duced to this one point: Whether there can be in the universe more than one unoriginated Being? Though this point has long since been decided by various considerations and arguments that carry with them the highest degree of rational probability; yet I apprehend it cannot be decided *demonstratively* until we have shewn what nature and attributes an unoriginated Being, *as such*, must *necessarily* have. But we cannot deduce his attributes from the nature of his origin or cause, since he had no origin or cause. And we are not allowed at present to consider him as the cause of any effects, (from which we might judge of his powers and attributes) or to know any thing more of him than what our first proposition demonstrates. We are therefore confined on this occasion to investigate his attributes (as I shall endeavour to do) from the single circumstance of his being unoriginated or self-existent.

This

This indeed is a circumstance or property the most important, beyond comparison, that can belong to any Being: And I doubt not but it will clearly appear that they who attributed self-existence to all substances knew not what they said, and were perfectly ignorant of the vast import of that term they so freely used. For as the stone in the prophetic vision, *that was cut out without hands, became a great mountain and filled the whole earth**. So the idea of a Being considered at first only as *unoriginated*, when it is attentively looked into, will gradually unfold and enlarge itself till it becomes the greatest of all our ideas, even that of a Being *whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain*.

* Dan. xi. 34, 35.

PROPOSITION II.

The whole nature of the unoriginated Being, or the aggregate of his attributes, is uncaused and must be necessarily and immutably what it is: so that he cannot have any attribute or modification of his attributes but such as were the eternal and necessary concomitants of his existence.

It is plain that no act or power of the unoriginated Being could have determined what his *own nature* should be. And it is also evident that no cause or power whatever could have *predetermined* what should be the nature of an unoriginated and eternal substance, or what attributes it should have.

have. Yet some nature and attributes it must always have had, since it must necessarily have always existed. Therefore this Being must have had his nature or the aggregate of his attributes, as he had his existence, independent on all causes. Now since (*by the Axiom*) whatever is contingent must have had a cause, it follows, that what had not a cause was not contingent *. Consequently there is nothing in the nature of this Being that was contingent, or that could possibly have been otherwise, in any respect, than it actually is, but every thing in his nature is *necessarily* and therefore *immutably* such as it is. It follows likewise: that no one of his attributes is capable of subsisting or taking place in his nature according to differ-

* The argument here used, That whatever is contingent is caused and therefore whatever is not caused is not contingent, is called by logicians, *controversio per contrapositionem*, and the force of it is evident.

ent states or modifications. For if it was, it must have required the efficiency of some cause to *determine* according to *which* of the states or modifications this attribute should at any time subsist; and without such determination (which it is impossible should be made) this attribute itself could not have subsisted or taken place at all in his nature.

Since the whole nature of this Being is *necessarily* what it is, it can never by any means be changed or varied in any respect. Or we may prove the perpetual immutability of his nature thus.

As he had his nature, like his existence, independent on any cause, and as no *change* can be made but by some cause, this independent state of his nature could never be *changed* to a *dependent state*: therefore his nature must ever remain independent, and out of the power of all causes,
and

and consequently can never be changed or varied.

Thus we see that no circumstance in the nature of the unoriginated Being can be contingent, but every thing must be necessarily and immutably what it is: so that he cannot have any attribute, or state or modification of his attributes, but such as were the eternal and necessary concomitants of his existence.

COROLLARY I. An unoriginated Being is *impassive*. That is, no power can act upon such a Being, or in any respect change or new modify his attributes, or introduce any thing *new* into his nature, or take any thing from it. For not even *Omnipotence* can act upon or change a thing that is, in its own nature *necessarily what it is*, and independent on all causes.

COROL-

COROLLARY 2. Since contingency, mutability, and the efficiency of all causes are excluded from the nature of the unoriginated Being, all truths relating to his nature and attributes must be necessary, eternal, and immutable truths, and therefore *capable* of demonstration. For when a proposition is proved to be not only true in fact, but *necessarily* true, it is then said to be strictly demonstrated. Propositions relating to the phænomena of nature are not accounted capable of demonstration; because though they are true in fact, as we can prove by observations, experiments and calculations, they relate to things that are in their nature contingent and mutable, and such as we can, without the least contradiction, suppose might have been *made* to be otherwise than they are. But propositions that relate to the properties of geometrical figures are *demonstrable*,

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because

because these properties have nothing contingent or mutable in their nature, they cannot be made to be otherwise than they are, and therefore whatever is true of them must be *necessarily* true. And since propositions that relate to the nature and attributes of an unoriginated Being, if they are true, must be *necessarily* true; such propositions must be *capable* of demonstration for the same reason that geometrical propositions are so.

This shews, that endeavouring to attain demonstration on this subject is not absurd, nor so unreasonable as some writers seem to have imagined. If therefore learned and ingenious men would consider the subject in this light, and give their attention to improve and extend the method of arguing here attempted, there is reason to hope that our knowledge, so far as it may extend on this subject, might be made to appear

appear perfectly demonstrative: and that this branch of learning, natural theology, which relates to the most important of all truths, might at length be placed, where every one would wish to see it, at the head of the *sciences*.

PROPOSITION III.

Whatever are the attributes of the unoriginated Being ; he must possess each of them unlimitedly, or in its whole extent, such as it is when considered in the abstract.

An attribute taken in its whole extent is a determinate and invariable thing, and admits not of different states, degrees or modifications, and is free from any contingent circumstance. Such an attribute therefore may be ascribed to the unoriginated Being, consistently with what we already know of his nature. But an attribute considered partially or as imperfect and limited admits of various degrees, and may just as *possibly* be limited to any one as to any other degree ; and therefore, in any
subject

subject whatever, it could not be limited to one particular degree otherwise than *contingently*, and this would imply the efficiency of some cause. (*Axiom.*) So that the limitation of an attribute, being in itself a circumstance manifestly contingent and *caused*, is incapable of taking place in the nature of an unoriginated Being; by the foregoing proposition. Since then he must have some attributes and a perfect one may, and an imperfect one cannot, belong to him, he must possess each of his attributes unlimitedly or in its whole extent, or such as it is when considered in the abstract.

PROPO.

PROPOSITION IV.

In whatever *manner* the unoriginated Being exists or is present any where, he must in the *like manner* exist or be present every where.

If we ascribe omnipresence to the unoriginated Being, we ascribe to him a thing that is invariable and incapable of different degrees or modifications, and therefore free from any contingent circumstance. But if we say he exists or is present only *somewhere* and not every where, this implies that his presence is limited in some one particular manner or degree. Now if this should be asserted, still there could be no *contradiction* in supposing his presence might *possibly* have been limited in some
other

other manner or degree. Therefore such a limitation of his presence could have taken place only *contingently* or in consequence of some previous cause (*Axiom.*) which affected his unoriginated substance and *determined* that its presence should be limited in *that one* particular manner or degree *rather* than in any *other*. But it is plainly impossible that could have been the case: therefore his presence is not limited or *local* but boundless and *universal*, and he exists every where in the same manner he does any where.

PROPO-

PROPOSITION V.

The unoriginated Being is one individual uncompounded substance identically the same every where, and to which our ideas of *whole* and *parts*, *magnitude* or *quantity*, are not applicable.

If we should suppose this Being or substance to be compounded, or to consist (as matter does) of what we call *parts*; these parts must be distinct from each other, each part must have its own existence independent on the existence of any other part, and one part could not be identically the same substance with another. Therefore in this case each part would be a distinct unoriginated Being or substance, and *as such*, would itself exist every where
alike;

alike; by the preceding proposition. So that these parts would not be really distinct or separate from each other or from the whole, as they were supposed to be, and the different denominations of *whole* and *parts* would be lost: which shews that our supposition was entirely inconsistent with the nature of this substance. Therefore the unoriginated Being cannot be composed of *parts*, but must be every where identically *one* and the *same* individual, uncompounded substance, to which our ideas of *whole* and *parts*, of *magnitude* and *quantity*, are not applicable. *Whole* is merely a relative term, and only means an aggregate of *parts*. *Magnitude* and *quantity*, by their definitions, imply a composition of parts *, and consequently cannot properly be applied to a substance which is

* They are thus defined by logicians. *Quantitas est accidens quod per se partem habet extra partem. Magnitudo est quantitas permanens.*

strictly and individually *one*; no more than *number* can be applied to an *unit*.

Here we ought to observe, that the *omnipresence* of the unoriginated Being is not inconsistent with the simplicity and individuality of his essence, more than any *limited* presence would be. For if a substance *individually one* can exist or be present throughout a space however small, no reason can be assigned why it might not as possibly exist throughout any space, or all space, preserving still the same individuality. So that the difficulty we meet with on this subject does not arise merely from our inability to *imagine* how or in *what manner* one and the same substance can be *every where* present: it arises rather from our not knowing *what it is* that constitutes unity in a substance*; and from

our

* Though the attributes, consciousness, thinking and willing seem to be infallible marks of unity in the

our consequent inability to imagine *how*, or in what manner, *any substance* can be strictly and individually *one* and without parts *. But still our *reason* assures us that there must be in the universe not only one but many substances that are individuals, or do not consist of parts, for all conscious and thinking substances must be such. The present subject is properly a subject of our abstract reasoning and of that alone: in judging about *it* we cannot have the

the subject they belong to, yet they do not constitute that unity.

* As to spirituality; the individual consciousness “of the one immense Being is as truly *one*; as the “present moment of time is individually one, in all “places at once. And the one can no more properly “be said to be an *ell* or *mile* of *consciousness*, (which “is the sum of your objection) than the other can “be said to be an *ell* or *mile* of *time*. This suggestion “seems to deserve *particular* consideration.”—Dr. Clarke’s answer to a sixth letter, see his Demonstration, p. 493.

smallest

smallest assistance from our imagination, whose sole use and office is to represent or picture to our minds the images of things that are or may be the objects of our outward senses; on other objects it can take no hold at all *. If therefore we should appeal from our reason to our imagination for the truth of this proposition, we should do as unwisely, as if we appealed to the testimony of our outward senses, and denied that there could be any such Being as the proposition describes, *because no one ever saw the like.*

* The old maxim of the schools, *Nil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu*; is false: it ought to have been, *Nil est in imaginatione quod non fuit prius in sensu.* Imagination is a power of recalling to our minds the ideas we have received from sensible objects; in all our reasoning about such objects it is so necessary that we could not do without it: but in reasoning about things that cannot bear any resemblance to the objects of our senses, imagination is of no use: it is apt to mislead us if we consult it.

COROL.

COROLLARY. After what has been already proved, it is almost needless to observe, that *matter* or *body* cannot be an unoriginated substance. Its essential attributes, extension, divisibility, figurability and mobility, imply *limitation*, and cannot take place but in the particular sizes, shapes, velocities and directions of motion that bodies have; all which are, in their nature, manifestly contingent, and therefore must be *made* to be such as they are by some efficient cause.

Matter is also quite *passive*, and has its attributes subject to numberless modifications. And then our ideas of magnitude and quantity are so inseparable from the idea of matter, that we cannot conceive a particle of matter, however small, as *one* substance, or otherwise than as an indefinite multitude of distinct parts or substances.

All

All the attributes of the unoriginated Being (whatever they are) exclude contingency and limitation. (Prop. II. and III.) And all the attributes of matter, as far as we can know them, are of such a nature as to imply contingency and limitation in their subject. So that all the attributes of the self-existent substance and all those of matter, as far as we know them, are so very opposite in their natures that we cannot conceive it possible there should be any one attribute alike, or of the same kind, in both substances. Among the various kinds of substances, which it is reasonable to think do exist, matter is probably the lowest or most imperfect, or, if I may so say, the nearest to non-entity, as a self-existent substance is the furthest from it. What has been said with respect to material substances will equally prove, that every substance, whose attributes are

limited

limited and capable of various states. and modifications, must be a derived and dependent Being, or that its nature and its existence must have been the *effect* of some *cause*.

PROPO.

PROPOSITION VI.

The unoriginated Being must necessarily possess intelligence and power unlimited, and all other natural attributes that are in themselves absolute perfections.

The distinction between natural and moral attributes is well known. The former are called *primary* attributes, and are conceived to arise (as it were) immediately from the substance itself. Moral attributes are of a practical nature, and relate to, or denote, the *manner of acting* which an intelligent Being observes towards others. These are called *secondary* attributes, because they are considered as resulting from the natural attributes; as will be shewn when I come to treat of them.

Several

Several attributes are called perfections with respect to the Beings who possess them, when the Beings are better and more complete with these attributes than they would be without them. Thus power and knowledge are perfections, even where they are much limited. But that an attribute may be called *absolutely perfect*, it must be perfect in itself, or incapable of addition, and must also be such a one as does not imply in its subject, (as the attributes of matter do) passiveness, divisibility, limitation or mutability, which are manifest imperfections or defects.

Intelligence and, its concomitant, actual knowledge I consider now as one attribute. This and active power when taken in their *whole extent*, are instances of attributes that are absolute perfections, as they do not admit of addition or any variation or different modifications, and do not require or imply in their subject any limitation,

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tion, mutability, passiveness, divisibility, or any other defect. Now it has been proved that the unoriginated Being is not only immutable, impassive, omnipresent and indivisible, but that whatever attributes he has must be unlimited and absolutely perfect. Whence it appears that unlimited intelligence and power are compatible with *all* the attributes of this Being, because they are all absolutely perfect, and absolutely perfect attributes are not incompatible with each other, but only with imperfections or defects, or what we call *negative* attributes; such for instance are *ignorance* and *weakness*. Therefore since intelligence and power are compatible with *all* the attributes of this Being, they cannot be excluded from his nature *necessarily*; that is, it cannot be *impossible* they should belong to him. Neither can they be excluded from his nature *contingently*; for then some cause must have
deter-

determined he should *not* have those attributes that it was *possible* he might have had; which is absurd. (*See the proof of Prop. II*) Consequently these attributes intelligence and power cannot be wanting to him on any account, but must belong to him; and therefore (*by Prop. II.*) they must be the eternal and necessary concomitants of his existence and all his other attributes. And (*by Prop. III*) his intelligence and power must be unlimited, or extend to every thing that can be known, and every thing that can be done.

There is a well known argument which has often been used for proving that *some one* unoriginated Being must be possessed of intelligence and power*, and which by the help of the preceding propositions, may be carried further than it has been, and may now be applied for proving that

* See the Introduction, p. 39. 40. 66.

every unoriginated Being, *as such*, must possess intelligence and power *unlimited*. For the preceding propositions have demonstrated that an unoriginated Being, *as such*, must be immutable, impassive, unlimited in all its attributes, omnipresent and indivisible; this nature therefore must be common to *every* unoriginated Being, supposing there are many. This being premised, we may apply the common argument as follows.

If intelligence and power had never belonged to *any* unoriginated Being, they could never have belonged to any originated or derived Being (for an effect cannot be more perfect than its cause) and these attributes could not have existed at all. Therefore they must belong to, at least, *some one* unoriginated Being. And then they must be the *necessary* concomitants of his existence and his other attributes by Proposition II. Thus we see that intelligence

gence and power must be *necessarily* connected with the attributes immutability, impassiveness, omnipresence and indivisibility in *some one* unoriginated Being; therefore they must likewise be *as necessarily* connected with the same attributes in every other unoriginated Being, supposing there are many; and therefore *every* unoriginated Being, *as such*, must be possessed of intelligence and power which (*by Prop. III.*) must be unlimited, or extend to every thing that can be known, and every thing that can be done.

Now if there be in nature any other attribute, besides those already mentioned, which is absolutely perfect, it must belong to some unoriginated Being; as otherwise it could not belong to any Being at all, for the reason assigned before. And therefore we may prove, as we did before, that such attribute must belong to every unoriginated Being. Consequently an unoriginated

originated Being must possess all natural attributes that are in themselves absolute perfections.

OBSERVATION.

We shall be able to deduce the moral perfections or attributes of the self-existent Being more properly and methodically in another place than we could do here ; and the proofs of the two following Propositions do not depend on the consideration of those attributes, nor on a particular enumeration of all the attributes of a self-existent Being.

From what has been already proved we conclude ; that a self-existent or unoriginated Being must be an uncompounded individual substance, eternal, necessarily-existing, immutable, impassive, omnipresent, and possessed of knowledge and power unlimited, with all other natural perfections. And this conclusion, I imagine, will
appear

appear not only reasonable, but almost *obviously* true, to every one who will but attentively consider *what it is* for a Being to be unoriginated and have independent existence in itself. For when a Being is brought into existence, its creator must predetermine what nature it shall have, and must confer its attributes together with its existence. But if a Being be *unoriginated*, nothing could predetermine what nature *it* should have. What then are we to say of it? Surely, not that it must have *this* or *that* particular limited nature rather than *some other*. What then *can* we say of it? But that, together with its existence, it *must have* every thing it possibly *might have*. That it must be whatever a Being or substance *can rise to*, or be a MAXIMUM of existence.

PROPO-

PROPOSITION VII.

There is in the universe but one unoriginated Being, who must therefore be the original fountain of all existence, and the first cause of all things.

The first proposition demonstrates that there must *necessarily* be one unoriginated Being; but neither the argument there used, nor any other argument, can prove there must *necessarily* be more than one. Because, when we have admitted one such Being, it is *possible* that all others may be derived from that one. This however does not prove that all others *must* be derived from that one, or that there may not be many unoriginated Beings in the universe of whose existence we have no knowledge

ledge or apprehension. The only way therefore by which we can determine whether it be possible there should be more than one, is by trying whether we can conceive or consistently suppose a *second* unoriginated Being. Now I say that such a supposition is inconsistent and untenable and must come to nothing.

For let us suppose there is a second Being, such as the first, unoriginated or self-existent and uncaused, having its non-existence impossible or having *necessity* as the *mode* of its existence. Now from what has been demonstrated it appears that *both* these Beings must be eternal, immutable, impassive, omnipresent, indivisible, and unlimitedly possessed of all natural perfections or attributes; insomuch that it is impossible one of these Beings should want any attribute the other has. Thus we find our idea of the second *supposed* Being (turn it as we will in our thoughts) is no other than

than the very-idea we had of the first. For all the attributes of the second are as much the same with those of the first, as the properties of one circle (abstractedly considered) are the same with those of another. And since these Beings are both eternal, and both every where alike present, they cannot differ from each other even in any circumstance of time or place. Consequently there can be no *possible* difference, nor any ground of distinction between them; and therefore they cannot be *distinct* Beings, but must be one and the same.

This way of arguing, I apprehend, may be admitted as conclusive, being exactly of the same kind and equivalent with that which geometers have allowedly used. For instance, two right lines, say they, cannot have a common segment; for in that case these lines must evidently have all their other segments in common also;
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so that all difference between them would vanish; and therefore they would not be two distinct lines, but must be one and the same. Just so, say we, two Beings cannot be unoriginated and have *necessity* as the common *mode* of their existence; for in that case they must have their whole natures and all the circumstances, which necessarily attend their existence, in common also; and therefore they would not be distinct Beings, but one and the same Being*.

* If it should be said, that as these are intelligent Beings they may still be supposed to have distinct consciousnesses and wills, and therefore may be distinct substances: I answer, this is only repeating the first supposition; viz. that these are two distinct substances and *therefore* have distinct wills; and I say that unless it can be shewn that the second *supposed* Being may possibly be a different and distinct substance from the first, we have no right to suppose it *may* have a consciousness or a will distinct from that of the first.

Thus

Thus we find it impossible even to form an idea of a *second* unoriginated Being, or to make it in any respect different from the idea we must necessarily have of the first; to which we cannot add any thing neither can we diminish aught from it. Hence it follows that all Beings in the universe, except one, are derived Beings, and must owe their existence, in some manner or other, to the one underived Being; who is therefore the *ultimate* and *original* fountain of existence and the first cause of all things.

PROPO-

PROPOSITION VIII.

All things owe their existence ultimately to the power of the first cause operating according to his free will.

From the mere existence of the one undervived Being, if considered apart from operating power, no effect or consequence of any kind can follow. For a cause cannot produce its effects merely by *existing*, and the very notion of a cause, *as such*, includes operation as the link which connects it with the effect. Therefore it is to the operating power of this one Being that all things owe their existence. Now we must allow that he exercised this active operating power knowingly and designedly or according to his own free will, so
that

that he might have abstained from exercising it. Or, on the contrary, we must affirm (what some persons seem to have thought) that his unlimited power must, through its own exuberance, break forth into action, or be exerted of necessity*. Now to say that power, either limited or unlimited, must be exerted *of necessity*, means that it is *impossible* such power should subsist without actual and incessant exertion. But this is contrary to the very notion of active power, for we can just as easily conceive it to subsist without actual exertion as with it. So that it is not *impossible* it should subsist without exertion, and therefore it is falsely affirmed that it must be exercised *of necessity*.

* The Earl of Rochester owned to Bishop Burnet that he always conceived the Deity to be a vast power that wrought every thing by the necessity of his nature. (See an account of his life written by the Bishop). And probably many others have had the same confused notion of absolute unlimited power.

Besides,

Besides, if we say that the power of the first cause must be exercised of necessity, we in fact deny him active power, and make him a mere passive instrument, and then it must follow that *necessity* is itself the real agent which exercises the power. But this is very absurd, for *necessity* is no real being or thing any more than *contingency* is: they are both but words or names that have no meaning but as they denote the two opposite *modes* of existing, and are utterly incapable of any agency, operation or efficiency whatever. Therefore the power of the first cause can be no otherwise exercised than knowingly and designedly, or according to his own free will. Consequently all things must owe their existence *originally* to his power operating according to the determination of his will.

As

As to the *manner* in which his power operates for giving existence, it cannot be expected we should be able to say any thing about it. The objection against the possibility of creating things out of nothing, as if it meant that they were made *out of nothing* as out of *materials*, is very trifling and founded only on an improper way of expressing what creation is. For by creation is meant, the causing a Being to exist *now* that did not exist *before*, which does not imply a contradiction to any known truth and therefore may be effected by unlimited power.

Having shewn that all things derive their existence *ultimately* from the power of one eternal, almighty and all-knowing Being, I proceed to inquire further into the perfections of this great author of all things. And here it is fit I should drop the metaphysical style, and speak of him
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in terms that may properly express the relation he bears to the rest of the universe. I shall therefore speak of him hereafter as the GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS ABOVE ALL, AND THROUGH ALL, AND IN US ALL *: To whose most awful and adorable NAME be ascribed all glory, honour and praise for evermore.

* Ephes. iv. 6.

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PROPO-

PROPOSITION IX.

Almighty God, the first cause and author of all things, must be a Being of infinite goodness, wisdom, mercy, justice and truth, and all other moral perfections, such as become the supreme author and governor of the universe.

Almighty God, from his natural perfections already mentioned, must be all-sufficient to his own happiness, and must be infinitely and unalterably happy in the eternal enjoyment and uncontrouled exercise of all his perfections. The attributes necessity of existence, immutability, omnipresence, omnipotence and all-sufficiency belong to him as a self-existent Being:
they

they are independent of his will, and are called the *natural* attributes of God, in contradistinction to those other perfections he possesses, such as goodness, wisdom, justice, mercy, truth or faithfulness, and the like, which are called *moral* attributes. These are of a practical nature, and express the *manner of acting* he is pleased to observe towards other Beings his creatures.

As God is always free to act or not to act on every occasion, (Prop. VIII.) he must be likewise free to act in any particular manner he pleases. And as his moral or practical attributes must be freely exercised according to his will (wherein consists their great excellence and their very essence), they are usually and properly enough said to be seated in his will. For this reason we are not to deduce them immediately from his self-existence, as we

do his natural attributes which are independent of his will. We must therefore prove that these moral perfections belong to almighty God, by shewing that they necessarily result from his natural attributes, or that to act in the manner which these perfections denote must always be pleasing and agreeable, and the contrary displeasing and disagreeable, to a Being who is independent, omniscient, omnipotent and all-sufficient. For it is plain that we can judge of what will be pleasing to any Being, or what manner of acting he will be like to pursue, only from what we know of his nature, that is, his natural attributes, circumstances and relation to other things.

Goodness consists in being pleased with communicating happiness to others. *Wisdom* is frequently used as synonymous with knowledge; but in the strict acceptation
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of the word it implies somewhat besides. It denotes knowledge as reduced to practice, and employed in choosing right and beneficial ends, and applying proper means for their attainment. Or we may say that wisdom consists in making a right and beneficial use of knowledge and power. This seems to be the only notion we can form of wisdom as a moral or practical attribute, and distinct from speculative knowledge or the bare perception of truth. We perceive also it must always imply, or be conjoined with, goodness or benevolence; for we cannot conceive knowledge and power to be *wisely* employed but for the advantage of their possessor or of others. Let a man have ever so much power and knowledge, yet if he makes no use, or no good use, of them we do not call him a *wise* man. I shall not now say any thing of justice or mercy or the other moral attributes,

butes, because if it be proved that goodness must belong to the divine nature, it will easily appear that these others must do so too.

This being premised, we may proceed to the proof of our proposition. And first, we are to consider what may be inferred from the unlimited knowledge and power of God, and how far his moral attributes may be deduced from thence. As all things owe their existence and all their powers and faculties to God, and have their being within his boundless presence; the very inmost nature and essence of all things, even the deepest thoughts of intelligent Beings, must be perfectly naked and open to his view. And he must perfectly know wherein the happiness of all intelligent and sentient Beings consists, and how it may be best promoted, and how their misery may be best prevented or removed.

moved. He also understands perfectly what are the best means, and how they may be best directed and employed, to accomplish whatever ends he chooses or thinks proper to effect. Thus he must know perfectly how and in what manner a Being of infinite power, wisdom and all moral perfections *would act* in every possible case; and he is able himself to do likewise, if it should so please him.

There can be no doubt but the exercise of his power and his other perfections must be pleasing to almighty God, and we know he has *in fact* been *pleased* to become the author and preserver of all things. But in this, besides exercising his power and knowledge, he must have had a further design respecting the numberless Beings he has brought into existence, and made capable of happiness and misery, pleasure and pain. For having designed
their

their existence and natures, it could not appear to him indifferent in which of these opposite states he should place them; because the thing is not indifferent in itself.

I am now to shew that it never could be pleasing, or appear eligible, to almighty God to place his creatures in a state of misery *as such*; but that his design in giving them existence must have been in order to their being happy.

No Being can choose misery or evil, *as such*, for himself; and if one Being should choose evil, *as such*, for another, since it could not be for the sake of that other, it must be for his own sake, that is, for the sake of gratifying some passion or inclination of his own, such as envy, jealousy, fear or resentment of an injury, or because he thinks the evil of another may in some way promote or secure his own happiness,

happiness; for on no other account can the evil of one Being appear eligible or desirable to another. But it is plainly as impossible that God should either in his original design, or in his subsequent dealings with his creatures, choose for them misery or evil, *as such*, and so as to prefer it to their happiness, on any of the forementioned accounts, as that he should do so through ignorance or inadvertency. Therefore as malevolence (which is a disposition to be pleased with the miseries of others rather than with their happiness) arises from, or implies some want, inferiority, or insufficiency, it cannot result from the natural attributes of the supreme all-sufficient Being; and consequently it can be no attribute of the divine nature. In like manner injustice, cruelty, deceit, and such other qualities as imply malevolence, unhappiness or insecurity of happiness, are excluded from the divine nature.

Since

Since then the natural attributes of God render it impossible he should ever be pleased with acting in such a manner as is denoted by any of the moral imperfections; we may conclude that the same attributes will render it most pleasing to him, or that it will be most agreeable to his nature, always to exercise benevolence and all other moral perfections; or in other words, that these moral and practical attributes necessarily result from his natural ones. But as this may seem rather an indirect proof, I will endeavour to give one that is more direct.

Almighty God cannot but be pleased with, or approve of, his own perfections and happiness, which are indeed the true objects of the highest approbation. He will therefore be pleased with that exercise of his power which gives existence to other Beings, and makes them bear in some measure

measure *his own image*, by resembling him in intelligence, free will and happiness. Such Beings he must approve of; since, so far as they can resemble him, they must be the proper objects of approbation. And he cannot but have a complacency or be pleasingly affected in contemplating what he approves: *In seeing every thing he hath made and beholding it to be very good.* As to a state of misery for his creatures, it must be in itself, or abstractedly considered, the object of his disapprobation, being directly opposite to that state which he approves of in himself. Thus we see that benevolence, or a disposition to communicate happiness, necessarily results from the natural attributes of God; and it must be as perfect and invariable as are those attributes from which it does result. Therefore the design of almighty God in becoming the author and preserver of all things must

must have been to communicate happiness to intelligent Beings, to make them capable of knowing and imitating him, and thereby of improving in perfections and happiness; which is the very best use that infinite power and knowledge can be applied to. In carrying on this vast and gracious design, his perfect knowledge secured him from the possibility of being mistaken as to what means were the fittest for effecting his purpose, his almighty power from any inability, controul or compulsion, and being all-sufficient to his own happiness, he could have no design respecting himself that was not consonant to the happiness of his creatures. We must therefore conclude, that he hath made and disposed all his works for the purpose of giving and perpetuating existence and happiness in such a manner as that they could not have answered the end he intended
better,

better, by being made and disposed in any other manner * Consequently he will, in pursuance

* Here it ought to be observed; that there is no creature or system of creatures so good but a better is possible. For whatever number of creatures God has made, he may still make more; and however good and perfect they are he may make others better and more perfect; because every created system must be finite in its extent and in the sum of its perfections, and must consequently be capable of addition. If therefore God in his works of creation was to be determined only by the *best possible*, as some writers have expressed themselves, he could never have pleased himself in making any world or system of creatures because there is none that can be called the *best possible*. Hence we see the folly of such questions as these; why was not such an order of creatures made more perfect and happy? Why was not this world created *sooner*? These I say are idle and unreasonable questions; for if the order of creatures spoken of had been made ever so much more perfect and happy, if this world had been created ever so much sooner, the same questions might still be asked. We are sure God does not make any thing but with a design of communicating happiness. But what share of perfections

purfuance of his original and invariable design, govern and deal with his creatures on all occasions, according to their refpective natures and circumftances, in fuch manner as may beft promote the perfections and happinefs of the whole fyftem of Beings, which is to be confidered as one great fociety under his governing providence. He will therefore continually ex-

fections and happinefs any order of creatures fhould poffefs, or when it fhould be created, muft be referred folely to his good pleafure, and can be determined by nothing elfe *. Therefore no order of creatures to whom exiftence is a bleffing, or among whom good predominates, can be called unworthy of their maker. Of the works of the creation we need not, indeed we cannot, fpeak more highly, than by faying they are worthy of their infinitely powerful and wife author : As to the epithets *greateft* and *beft poffible*, they can be applied only to the great Creator himfelf ; whole perfections and happinefs are ftrictly infinite or incapable of addition.

* See Archbishop King's Treatife on the Origin of Evil.

ercise all those other moral perfections which we distinguish by the names of justice, mercy, truth or faithfulness, and such like. For these terms do not denote attributes really distinct in themselves, but are denominations given to the exercise of power and wisdom as applied on different occasions to different objects, according to their several natures and circumstances, in such manner as may be necessary for preserving the order and promoting the good of the whole creation. And it is by the exercise of these attributes that God becomes the great *moral*, as well as natural, governor of the universe. God must therefore be perfectly good and righteous in all his works, and wise in all his ways.

I shall now conclude with some reflections that may further explain and illustrate what has been said in proof of this proposition.

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I observed before, that we cannot form an adequate idea of wisdom, without a reference to benevolence as well as to knowledge. For that benevolence may have its effect, it must be directed by knowledge, and knowledge, when employed in contriving how best to execute benevolent purposes, is called wisdom. And wisdom is seen as well in the excellence and goodness of the end proposed, as in the fitness of the means employed. It is therefore a compound attribute; in one light it appears knowledge, in another goodness. For instance; we say very rightly, that the *wisdom* of God is seen in the works of the creation. Now when we contemplate the astonishing beauty, order and magnificence of the material world, and consider the great simplicity and uniformity of the means by which the operations therein are conducted, we immediately

mediately conceive an idea of perfect knowledge, skill and contrivance, or, if I may so say, ingenuity. But when we look further and perceive *all this* designed for the best of purposes, the use and happiness of intelligent and sentient Beings, we are struck with the idea of immense goodness, and what appeared knowledge and skill now shews as consummate wisdom.

Since the divine goodness comprehends in it all moral perfections, that we may acquire a clear and proper notion of it, we must view it as exercised on a variety of different objects and occasions, or as analyzed into its several branches of justice, mercy, faithfulness and the like; for thus shall we better understand its nature, and receive more awful and lasting impressions of it, than we could do, were we to consider it *merely* as an intense benevolence prompting him to promote the

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happiness

happiness of all his creatures unconditionally, without a due regard to their natures and qualifications. For that would be an unskilful and ineffectual way of promoting the happiness of imperfect creatures, and therefore could never be pursued by him whose benevolence is guided by infinite knowledge.

From what has been proved we may see how justly and with what great suitability the scriptures so particularly ascribe *holiness* unto God. For that word is used to express the transcendent excellence of his nature, by which he is infinitely removed from all moral imperfections, from all impurity, or iniquity, that is, from whatever tends to diminish that perfection and happiness which he has made his rational creatures capable of attaining. So that he cannot look on any thing of this sort without displeasure: *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: he chargeth*

chargeth his angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight. The word *holiness* also denotes the positive moral rectitude of the divine nature, or that God invariably wills what is right and fit to be done, or what his unerring wisdom points out as tending most to promote the general good of that endless variety of creatures to which he has been pleased to give existence.

Some writers seem to have imagined that there is a difficulty in conceiving how this perfect moral rectitude, which makes it impossible that God should will or do what is evil, can be reconciled with that freedom of will and liberty of acting which is essential to his nature: But the truth is, neither moral perfection nor imperfection is at all inconsistent with that liberty of will which constitutes a free agent, that is, a Being who hath a power of acting with-

out being acted upon, and who can either act or forbear to act; by which power an *agent* is distinguished from an *instrument*. This difficulty then is easily removed. For actions of all denominations are equally the objects of power, and consequently the objects of his unlimited power. Therefore he as much exercises his liberty in benevolently *abstaining* from evil actions, as he does in the performance of good ones. It would be but a meer quibble to say he *cannot* do an evil action, because he cannot have the inclination or will which must always precede an action; for that is only saying, he cannot do an action which he chooses to abstain from.

When it has sometimes been said, that the perfections of God must *necessitate* him to act, and to do only that which is good: This is not meant in the same sense as when it is said, he is *necessitated* to exist.

But

But the meaning is, that the natural perfections of God form in him a certain and steady principle of acting wisely and benevolently. And therefore we say he must continue to act and do only what is good, of *moral necessity*. For necessity in this sense of the word is consistent with free will and agency: it expresses only that kind of assurance with which we expect that a rational agent will pursue some one particular manner of acting, from what we know of his natural powers and moral qualities. Where the natural powers and moral qualities of an agent are imperfect, and more or less liable to change, there we can only pronounce, with a greater or lesser degree of moral assurance or probability, that he will continue to pursue one particular way of acting. But when the agent we speak of is God, whose attributes are perfect, invariable, and perfectly consistent

sistent and connected with each other, there the term moral necessity or moral certainty is applicable in its fullest force; it implies that we may, without the least danger of being mistaken, pronounce that he will invariably pursue such a manner of acting as is agreeable to the nature of an all-perfect agent. For we plainly perceive, (to use the words of Doctor Clarke,) " That it is
 " as impossible and contradictory to suppose
 " that *his will* should *choose* to do any thing
 " contrary to goodness, justice, or truth, as
 " that *his power* should *be able* to do any
 " thing inconsistent with power. It is no
 " diminution of power not to be able to
 " do things which are no objects of power;
 " and in like manner it is no diminution
 " either of power or liberty to have such a
 " perfect and unalterable rectitude of will
 " as never possibly to *choose* to do any thing
 " inconsistent with that rectitude *."

* Clarke on the Attributes, P. 122. 10th Edit.

No one attribute of God can in any respect restrain or diminish another; on the contrary they all are perfective of each other. Thus his freedom or liberty of acting is made perfect by his power and knowledge; for these make it impossible he should ever meet with any resistance to his will from without, or ever experience from within the smallest difficulty or hesitation in determining what he should do on any possible occasion. Therefore the freedom with which he determines all things is as perfect as the ease with which he performs them; and this is a perfection of liberty none but a Being of infinite power and wisdom can enjoy. The supreme excellence of his goodness and his other moral attributes consists in their being thus freely and voluntarily exercised. This it is that makes him the most amiable and the best, as he is the greatest, of Beings. This renders him the immediate
object

object of our utmost gratitude, love and praise. All his attributes are truly the objects of our highest veneration and worship. But we particularly *praise* the Lord for his *goodness* and *give him thanks* for the wonders he doth for the children of men.

As the particular nature of God's moral attributes, and the occasions on which they are severally exercised, are fully displayed to us, and most powerfully recommended to our imitation, in the holy scriptures, and have been largely explained and illustrated by a great number of pious and learned writers, it is by no means necessary that I should enter particularly into this extensive part of the subject. The end of my present undertaking is answered if I may have proved, that all natural perfections belong *necessarily* to God as an unoriginated, self-existent Being; and that all those of the moral or practical kind *necessarily* belong

belong to him, as an independent, omniscient, omnipotent and all-sufficient Being: so that all perfections must be equally and essentially parts of his nature.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew how from one simple principle, viz. That there is such a thing as unoriginated existence, our reason may lead us to the knowledge of one supreme Being, the God and father of all, whose existence and perfections are the foundation of all religion and morality and of all truths worthy of much attention. I trust the account here given of his nature and attributes will be found plain, intelligible and consistent, and, so far as it goes, agreeable to what he himself has taught us in his holy word: That inestimable treasure of divine knowledge, wherein are revealed to us many truths of infinite importance; to the discovery of which our unassisted reason could never
have

have attained. And these truths his all-wise providence hath ascertained to the world with such kind of evidence as is in itself perfectly sufficient, and is also best suited to the general capacities and apprehensions of men.

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